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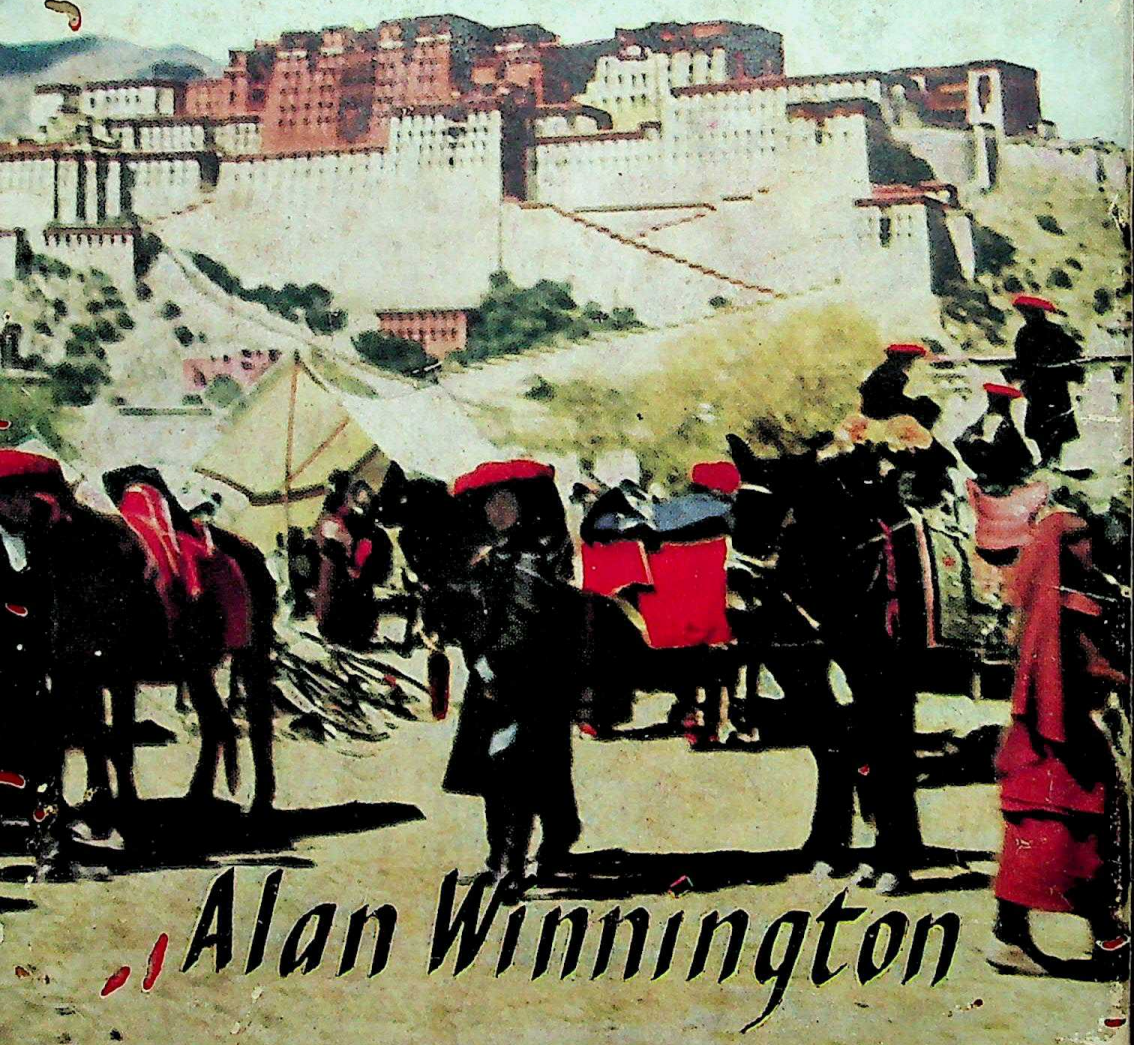

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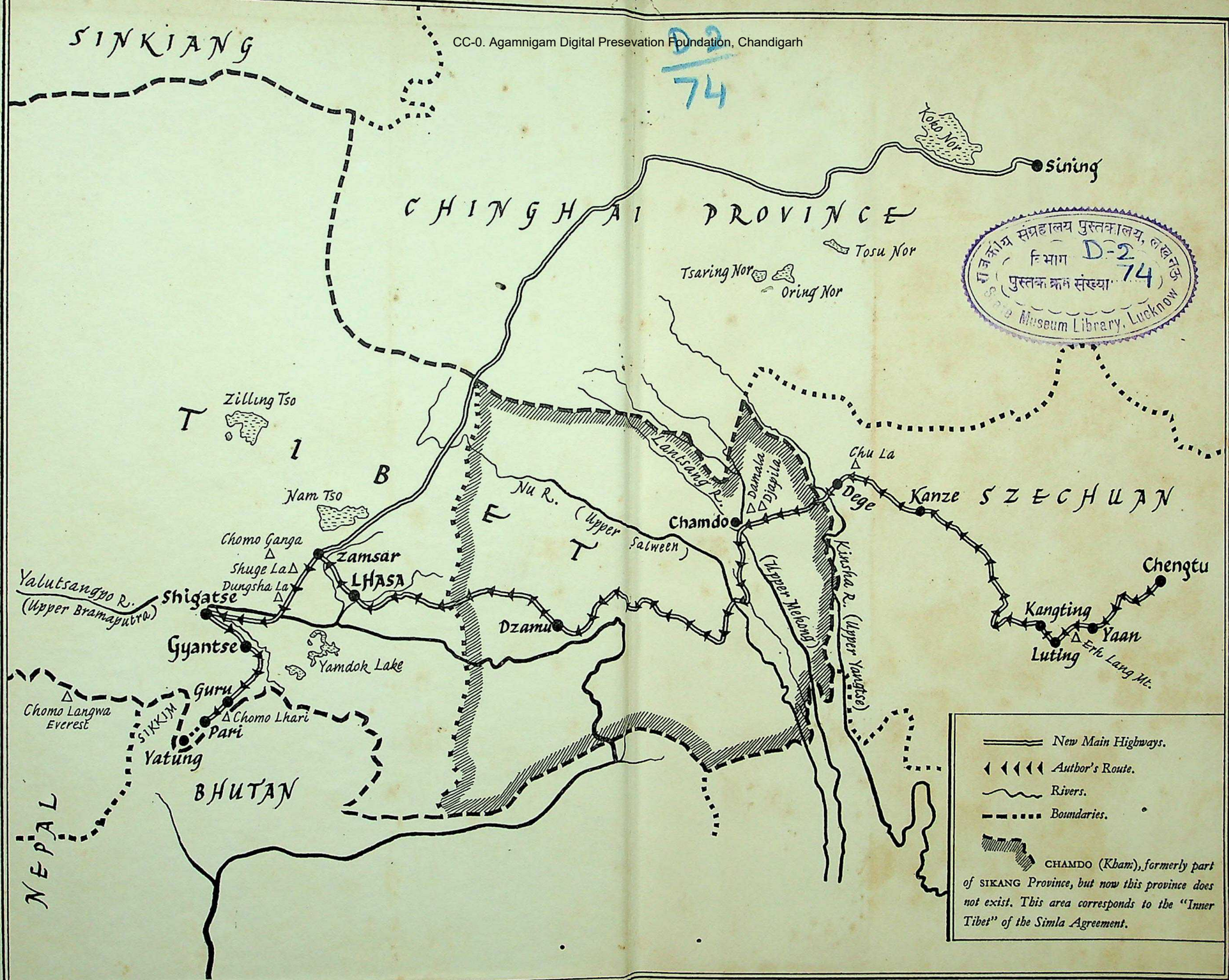

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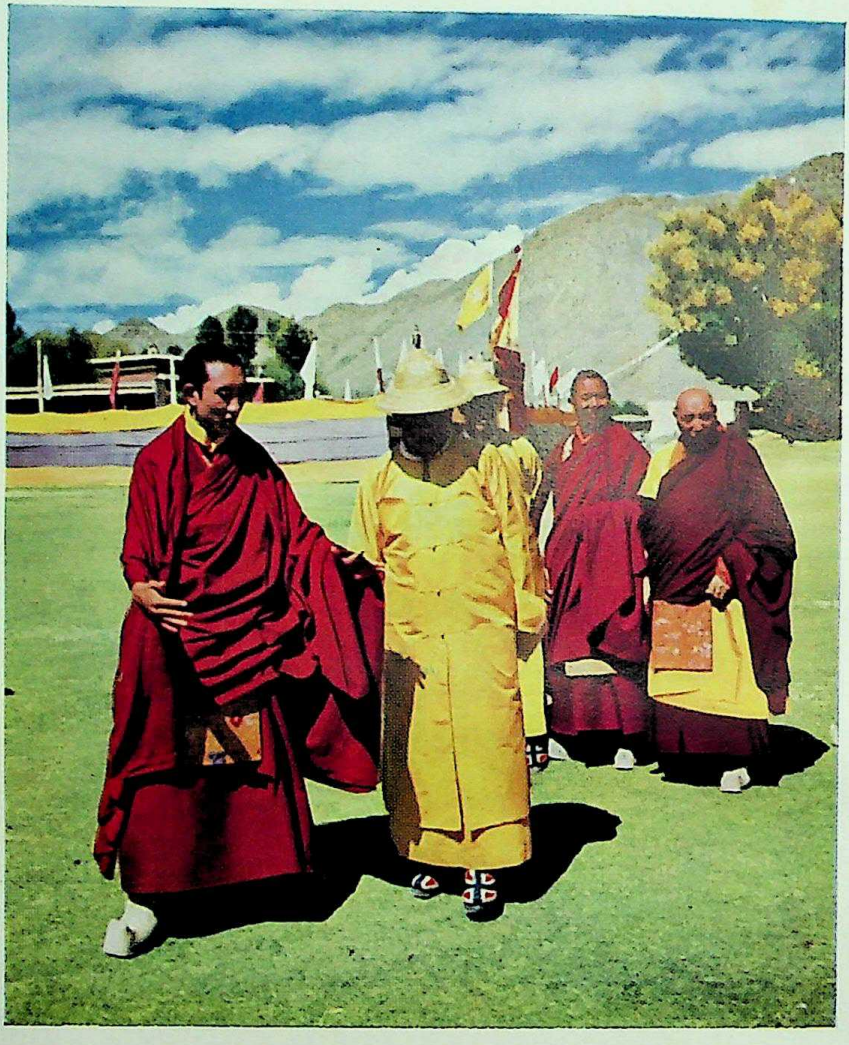

The Panchen Lama and his chief adviser, Dji Jigme

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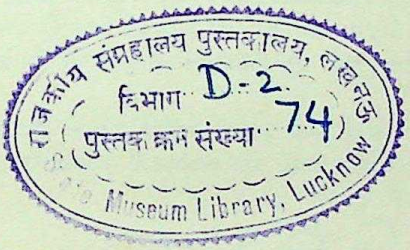
TIBET

Record of a Journey

by

ALAN WINNINGTON



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FOREWORD

THIS book is a brief account of a journey of some 4,000 miles across the Tibetan plateau during the summer and autumn of last year. During that tremendous and unforgettable journey I probably saw more of Tibet than any foreigner ever saw before, mainly owing to the convenience of using the new roads and to the fact that I was a guest of the two Grand Lamas of Tibet and the Chinese Government. Because of this I was able to go wherever I wished and meet everyone I asked to meet. All my questions were patiently and exhaustively answered, although, on looking back, many of them now seem very foolish and sometimes even discourteous. For their unfailing politeness and help I thank the Tibetan people and their leaders.

My aim in writing this book is to help to clear up the "mystery of Tibet". A good many things have been written about Tibet which have little or no basis in fact. I hope that I am faithfully carrying out the injunction of the two Grand Lamas to "tell the truth about Tibet", and to correct some of the misunderstandings that have been created about the plateau.

I have striven to set down what I saw and heard factually and without drawing conclusions. Readers can draw their own.

ALAN WINNINGTON.

PEKING.
July, 1956.

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To

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Serenity the Panchen Lama, and all the people of Tibet, clerics and laymen, aristocrats and commoners

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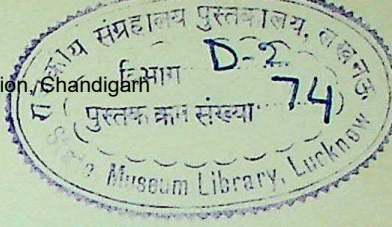

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CHAPTER ONE

GUESTS OF THE LIVING GODS

A dream come true—Blood pressure—Foreigners in Tibet—What happened since 1950?—The tableland—"You can't buy air"—The new roads—Aristocrats and serfs study together—A clan warrior reforms—Cease-fire talks in the mountains

IT was a bad moment for a medical examination. I had been in a state of excitement for twenty-four hours since the phone had rung and I had been told that my long-hoped-for visit to Tibet had been agreed. I lay awake all night working out plans. Next morning the phone rang again. Could I go along for a medical check-up immediately? Very important. "And, by the way, I suppose you know that if your blood-pressure is over 130 you can't go." I did not know and also had no idea what my blood-pressure might be.

For years I had dreamed this journey. In 1950 I had filed my first application with the Chinese Government to go to Tibet but the Korean war had intervened and I was assigned there as a reporter for the duration. Immediately after returning to Peking I had renewed my old application and at last I had been told I could go on a special convoy that was being organised in co-operation with the Tibetan authorities. To hear now that, of all things, my blood-pressure might veto the trip set my heart pounding, pushing up my blood-pressure at the very thought. "Be calm," I kept telling myself as I went across Peking to the medical examination, feverishly considering one after another what strings I could pull if the doctors said I was unfit.

Eight other correspondents from various countries were also waiting impatiently for the test—with poorly simulated calm—nervously cracking jokes about each other's arteries. When the armband was being strapped I could feel my pulse fluttering like a captured sparrow and my blood-pressure rising round my ears. The mercury column flopped up and down around the 150 mark and I began an argument with the doctor. "Really, my blood-pressure is normal. It's just the excitement."

"If everyone would calm down it would help to get a better average," the doctor joked. "I can't stop you going; the choice is up to you. But it's my duty to warn you that high blood-pressure is very

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dangerous if you are going on the plateau. I suggest that you come back tomorrow and I'll test you all again." There were smiles all round and noisy sighs of relief. Next day we all had excellent pressures to record. Mine was down to 118. Later a French correspondent who had not attended the tests joined the convoy. He had high blood-pressure and his blood-stream and organs failed to adjust to the rarefied air of the Tibetan plateau. He spent most of the trip in an oxygen tent and as the doctors in Tibet fought to save his life I realised why the Peking doctors had been so careful.

Very few western people have visited Tibet, partly because of its unique physical features: height, rarefied air, ruggedness and extreme variations of climate. Moreover, the Tibetans themselves, worried at the penetration of India and Nepal by the British, added their own obstructions to those provided by nature. All Tibetan people were under the strictest orders from their leaders not to allow the passage of any westerners, saying that once these westerners got a foothold anywhere they "make matters of no importance into matters of great moment, pick quarrels and find ways of taking control."

Apart from the expedition to Lhasa by a British-officered army of several thousand Sikhs and Gurkhas in 1904, only a handful of foreigners had ever completed the arduous journey on foot and horseback over the Himalaya Mountains to the Holy City. A few went in disguise, hand-picked, carefully trained survey spies who had been acclimatised to high altitudes, and of those very few reached Lhasa. They were turned back long before reaching the sacred city where the Dalai Lama lives and rules.

I was to go in a very different manner, travelling from the east through parts of Tibet where no westerner had ever been before, travelling with the agreement and help of both of Tibet's young Living Gods, the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. Moreover, I was to be the first British person to go there since the Chinese army crossed the eastern Tibet border in 1950 and the Dalai Lama fled to a Tibetan town near the Indian border. At that time there had been gloomy predictions about what would be the fate of Tibet's ancient system of clerical-lay rule by monks and aristocratic officials. But the Chinese army did not pursue its advance. Instead, the Dalai Lama sent a delegation to Peking which negotiated an agreement in May, 1951, under which Tibet was to "return to the big family of the motherland (China)" and no changes would be made in the Tibetan way of life except at the demand and with the agreement of the Tibetan people. This agreement

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guaranteed religious freedom and non-interference in the income of the monasteries or in the special form of government that Tibet has evolved. Since that agreement was signed, no foreign correspondent had set foot in Tibet. What had been going on in the years between? What had been the impact of the New China on one of the most rigid and remote societies on earth? How much was truth and how much fiction in the scores of contradictory reports that had been written about the "Forbidden Land," the "Roof of the World", this magnet of explorers and adventurers for several centuries past?

Their contradictoriness appears even in descriptions of Tibet's marriage system, which would seem to be a question of fact and not opinion. Most people who have spent any time in Tibet agree that it is very common for one woman to marry several brothers, or sometimes for one man to marry several sisters. But the Tibetan wife of a former British Consul in China published a book in which she vigorously denied this long-accepted fact. On more important matters scarcely two writers have agreed.

In spite of contradictions, I read everything I could find about Tibet, certainly all the important works and most of the others, to make myself familiar with everything that has been written on this romantic land in the skies. Considering how few people have been there, the literature on the subject is vast, but I found much more reliable the talks I had with one or two Chinese who had recently come back from the plateau.

Tibet is a huge tableland, north of India and Burma, covering half a million square miles and having an overall altitude of between 12,000 and 15,000 feet above sea-level. It is surrounded by and crossed by colossal mountain ranges rising to over 20,000 feet and dotted with great looming peaks covered with perpetual snow. On this plateau, owing to the combination of southerly position and altitude, I was told, an amazing variety of climate is to be found. It is commonplace to change from furs to shirt-sleeves several times a day. Owing to the rarefied air, there is little radiation, and one side of a person's body can feel cold while the other is in danger of serious sunburn, for the sun strikes swiftly owing to the lack of an air barrier to its rays, and deceptively because the surroundings appear so cool.

"Air is free, but up there you can't buy it," one Chinese commented to me, describing how he felt when he first went up on the highest grasslands. It takes a healthy young person from the lowlands something between six weeks and two months to make enough red

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blood cells to compensate for the low oxygen content of the air. In the meantime, a few steps uphill cause dizziness, palpitations and rapid exhaustion, though there is little discomfort when at rest, and rapid recovery of energy unless the person concerned is subject to mountain sickness. The lower atmospheric pressure causes a change in the volume of the gases dissolved in the blood and in some people this occasions the most violent reactions, described to me as though the heart, at each beat, is trying to break through the wall of the chest and the pumping blood compresses the brain in a ring of pulsating steel. Nausea, retching, incoherence, fear of heights and bad temper are among the symptoms of mountain sickness.

In the incredibly short period of four years the Chinese army had driven two roads across the Tibetan plateau, one running from the north, across desolate swampland and desert, and the other, 1,413 miles long, from east to west. This road, from Ya-an to Lhasa, crosses the fourteen major mountain ranges which run from north to south and eleven big rivers. This was the road we were to use. It meant flying from Peking to Chungking, taking a train from there to Chengtu and driving to Ya-an, where the new road begins. This journey—Peking to Lhasa—which five years ago would have taken months to complete, depending on horsemanship and luck, is now being regularly done in ten to fourteen days, depending on the determination of the traveller. We had decided to go leisurely to Lhasa, to allow time for looking around and acclimatisation.

But what to take for such a journey? August 8 in Peking's sweltering summer found me at the airport with a suitcase weighing all of my allotted 56 lb. and wearing a fur-lined jacket, fur hat and boots, carrying a mackintosh and big shoulder case full of camera equipment. These efforts to save weight on the allotted baggage drew curious looks from the airport staff which became open astonishment and head-tapping when it was learned that I was flying south to Chungking, notorious as one of China's "ovens" in the summer. At that moment, with streams of sweat running all over me and into my boots, the operation of my heart was tested more severely than at any time on the plateau.

Leaving Chungking, where people go home by funiculars or by climbing steps up its sweaty hills, we gathered in Chengtu to get our convoy together and prepare equipment for the journey. Soviet jeeps, tough, wide and powerful, Zis six-wheeled lorries and packages began to arrive in the forecourt of the luxurious Chengtu hostel as

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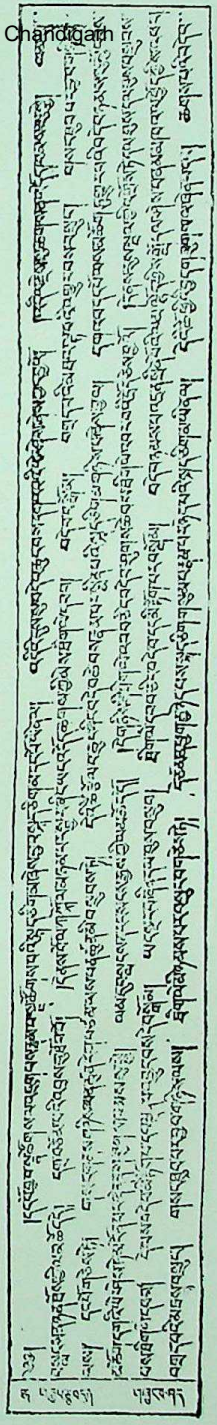
Princess Wen Chang

King Songtsan Gambo

Portrait busts in the Potala Palace

To be read from left to right. Actual size 17½ ins. by 2½ ins.



Page of Buddhist scripture printed from wood block

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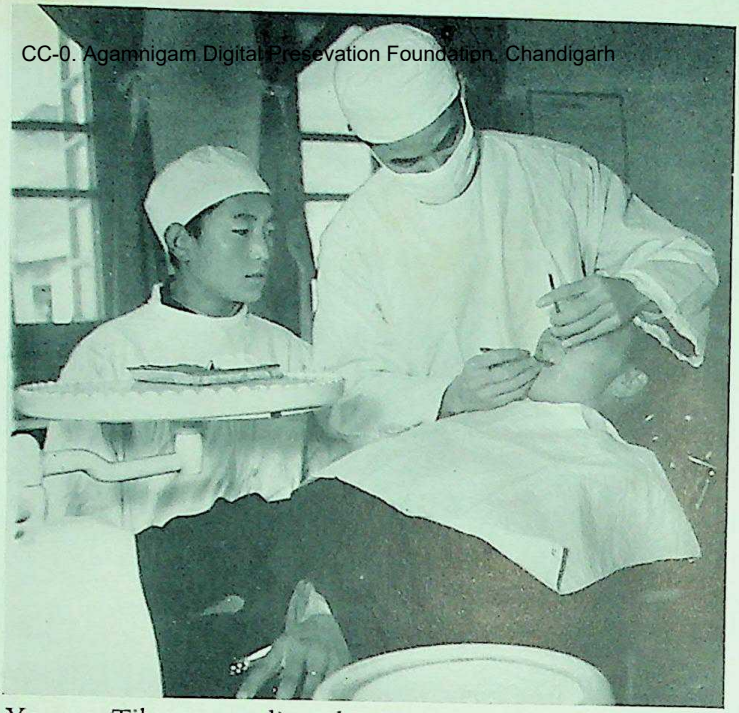

Young Tibetan studies dentistry in Chamdo People's Hospital

Ballroom dancing

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preparations went ahead for the "on-end" run to Lhasa. Camp-beds, bedding, tents, field kitchens, ground-sheets, oxygen cylinders, eatables beloved by westerners but scorned by the Chinese, such as butter, coffee, jam and potatoes, accumulated on the big porch. Tibetan weather is counted as the most treacherous anywhere, and although there are hostels with sleeping and cooking facilities spaced a few hours' drive apart all along the road, the possibility of getting immobilised between mountain passes has to be allowed for. All my sufferings at the Peking aerodrome were nullified when the Chinese army threw in on loan a lorryload of bedding, fur coats, boots, gloves and quilted winter clothing as a contribution to the success of the venture.

While all these preparations were being completed, I had several days in this typical Szechuan town with its bamboo-chaired, open tea-shops every few yards, full of people fanning themselves, sipping tea, chatting and playing cards. For me they were very fruitful days spent in the Chengtu Institute for National Minorities, second largest in China, where about 200 Tibetans of all classes are studying to become administrators. Most of the students are adults, sons and daughters of Tibetan aristocrats, peasants, nomads, clan warriors, monks and ex-monks, a cross-section of Tibetan society, studying side by side in this new college. Every day while the convoy was being equipped I wandered round the Institute talking to the Tibetan students and working myself into the atmosphere of the plateau. About one-third of the students are Tibetans, the rest being Miaos, Yis and other minority peoples in China, who wear their national costume, eat their usual food and study in their own languages. I was taken by a Tibetan student to see the complete Lamaist temple in the institute grounds, with its polished metal chalices filled with clear water, butter lamps burning before golden images and a room full of Buddhist scriptures. Most Tibetans are devout Lamaists, perhaps the most religious people in the world, and the students at this school are no exception. There is also a Moslem prayer-room for the pupils who follow Mohammed.

One of the first students I met here was the twenty-year-old wife of another Tibetan student. Both had belonged to the same aristocrat in Lhasa, one as a stableman and the other as personal maid to the nobleman's daughter. Being under the same estate, they had married and a year later the blow fell—the daughter was to be wed and would take the maid to her husband's home, separating the couple. The stableman pleaded to be allowed to go too, but this would have been too great a

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loss of manpower on the estate and permission was refused. In desperation they ran away and after begging and doing casual work for a living, met the Chinese army and volunteered for road-building work. After a while they asked to be allowed to study and finally reached Chengtu.

At the opposite end of the social scale is Joma Buje, beautiful daughter of a very unusual Lhasa noble. He was for many years a Living Buddha in the ruling Lamaist sect, and of course forbidden to marry. But he was a favourite of the previous Dalai Lama, the thirteenth, and when he fell in love at the age of fifty-four, got the pontiff's permission to marry. His daughter, oldest of several children, was wearing a gown of expensive English worsted bought in Lhasa and had a big gold wrist-watch of the most informative sort, that tells the seconds and from there up to the phases of the moon. Her elegant Tibetan clothes were topped by a peaked workman's cap into which she had tucked her plaits, and she was the only Tibetan girl I saw wearing such a cap. She told me her one aim in life was to go to work in a factory. "We noble girls never worked and never wanted to," she said, "but now a lot of my friends want to go into factories. It's much more interesting. There will soon be factories in Tibet and I have been promised that I can go and work in one." Joma Buje was an early student at the Institute and rode most of the way there on horseback. Any man can ride a horse, but only noble women are allowed to, she said. I asked her about polyandry—the first of many times I asked that question—and she said: "Oh yes, there is polyandry, but my family does not believe in it. I know of some cases where a girl has two or three husbands, all brothers, but not more than two or three. I don't know why."

In contrast to this aristocrat who wanted to work in a factory was Jume Bajang, a serf-girl training to work as a local government administrator. The dozen Tibetan children in the institute are mostly children of noblemen. One of these, named Sodo, spent the whole afternoon telling me about the lives of Tibetan boys, the games they play and what they talk about. He wore a grey trilby hat—man's size—and constantly fidgeted in his shirt while he was talking. When he could stand it no longer, he put his hand round his back inside his shirt and brought out a live sparrow, which hopped on the table, quite tame. Sodo's ambition is to drive a locomotive or a ten-wheeled lorry, but he thinks maybe when he grows up he will become a pilot between Lhasa and Peking.

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One of the older students was Jaiji Lobu, thirty-four-year-old cattleman, son of a petty clan leader on the high Tibetan grasslands, a swashbuckling clan-fighter, with a cheerful eye and a flash of gold from his mouth when he smiled, which was nearly all the time. He wore a long-sleeved Tibetan gown with the right sleeve thrown off his arm and almost trailing the ground behind. His gold-brocaded and fur-trimmed hat was worn with an impudent tilt and his black top-boots gleamed like mirrors. Having laid aside his long rifle and silver scabbarded sword when he became a student, he now wore only a six-inch blade in a silver sheath hanging from his red silk sash. Lobu spoke racily and without trying to impart information, acting events over again, throwing himself on the ground as he described battles and near escapes, striding about and gesticulating.

His clan territory was, and is now once again, in the most easterly part of Tibet, Kham. It is a small clan and about eight years ago got driven off its grasslands by a bigger clan headed by a man named Maja.

"With us herdsmen it has always been fight or die," Lobu said. "Maybe fight and die, too, but unless we fought we could not survive. Nothing will grow on the high lands except grass and we cannot eat grass. Without our cattle we are finished and without our grass our cattle are finished. Animals got diseased, died in the snow, were killed by wild animals or got stolen. Then nothing was left but to steal from someone else. Strong clans stole the cattle of weaker ones. If we wanted to move to lower land for winter grazing, we would have to fight for it, and then when we went back to our summer pastures we had to fight the people who had moved in while we were away. Fighting, fighting, always fighting. Sometimes we lost, sometimes we won. But nothing was ever settled.

"About eight years ago we were driven off our land by Maja's clan and lost all our cattle. We had nothing left. My father foolishly decided to take the matter to a local official. Obviously Maja would win the case, because he had the means to give the official a secret push (bribe) and we had nothing at all. All that father got was a sentence of 100 lashes and an order to put his thumbprint on a paper which gave Maja our clan grazing rights."

Pacing up and down, Lobu said: "Things couldn't be allowed to stay like that. We got together six uncles and some friends and raided Maja when he was least expecting it. We killed him and ran his cattle out—a running fight all the way with Maja's kinsmen, but we had the

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better of it. Surprise was on our side and my father was very experienced and calm. We got clear with the cattle and moved out of the district. I got wounded." Lobu did a vigorous mime showing how he had been slashed across the leg with a sword during the battle and then slipped his top-boot down to show the thick blue scar across his calf. "I can't climb mountains any more," he grinned, "but I can still ride as well as ever."

Lobu's family wandered further north with the cattle they had won. "Our clan developed from one family until father was leading fifty families and he organised sixty horsemen to raid others. So we got rich, but we made many enemies and finally the Tibetan Government put a price on our heads. Things began to get dangerous."

At this stage, Lobu said, his father had sent him inland into Kansu Province of China with instructions to learn the Han[1] language and see what the chances were of migrating to a safer place. This was in 1950, just before the Chinese army marched into Tibet from the north and east.

"I ran across the People's Liberation Army when they were driving out the Kuomintang," Lobu said. "You can imagine we had some scores to settle with Chiang Kai-shek's people. I wasn't too clear what was going on, but if they were against Chiang Kai-shek I was for them. So I helped the P.L.A. with transport. I did what they called liaison work too, going ahead of the army and telling the people that this was a good army that paid for all transport and did not kill cattle."

All this took time. Lobu was learning the language and the P.L.A. was getting closer to the place where his father was raiding and battling along with a price on his head. In 1951 the truce talks began in Korea and the whole Chinese army was discussing the possibility of a cease-fire. "They were all for a cease-fire," Lobu said, "and they talked to me about feuding. If a cease-fire was a good thing in Korea, it was good in Kham, they said to me, and they described how much better life could be if we all stopped fighting. I said that was fine but who would stop first? Then the P.L.A. men said they would go and see father about the opening of cease-fire talks with the Maja clan.

"I didn't think the old man would agree and I was right. He wouldn't hear of it, and said I had gone soft, and he never expected a son of his

[1] The Hans are the majority nation of China—the people commonly referred to as Chinese. There are many minority nations, among them Mongolians, Tibetans, Uighurs, Miaos and Yis. The Han language is that spoken by the majority. In China people do not speak now of the "Chinese" language but the "Han" language in order to show respect to the minority peoples who are also Chinese.

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to be going cap in hand to the Maja clan to beg for peace. Of course, nobody was willing to be first. So the Chinese army made all the arrangements, called the clan leaders to send representatives to a meeting and saved everyone's face. They promised to see fair play, and finally father sent me along as his representative."

Lobu described the long meeting, lasting many days, in a tent of woven yak hair in the grasslands. One by one the clan representatives agreed to settle all disputes by peaceful means and signed documents delimiting the grazing rights. "When I got back to father," Lobu said cheerfully, "I didn't pick my words carefully enough, and before I could explain everything I got the beating of my life for making concessions.

"There's little enough stealing of animals now," Lobu went on. "At any rate, there is no more raiding and big-scale fighting, though people will still take a few cattle quietly if the owner is not around. The herds in our district are two or three times the size they used to be."

I asked what his father was doing now.

"Father's settled down and become a member of the county government," Lobu answered. "There's no longer any fighting to do, so after a while Father said to me: 'You don't want to grow up like me, not even able to write your own name. Why don't you go to study?' So that's how I came to be here."

Lobu introduced me to a member of the Maja clan who is also a student. They gave each other enormous smacks on the shoulders and Lobu explained: "At first we wouldn't look at each other and we were looking for the first chance we got to settle some old scores. But they gave us a good talking to and made us shake hands. So we agreed not to fight and made friends."

Talking to these students in Chengtu before the journey had begun provided a strong enough whiff of Tibet to make me impatient for the start of the run over 1,500 miles of road to the Holy City.

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CHAPTER TWO

OVER ERH LANG MOUNTAIN

Musk and motor-cycles—What not to do in Tibet—Lorries in the sky—Gateway to Tibet—Road under a waterfall—The first pass—Bamboo and edelweiss—Earthquakes—The eaves of the world's roof

THE jeep that was to take me to Lhasa nosed its way out of Chengtu for the 100-mile drive to Ya-an, where the new road begins, driven by a Chinese army driver whose first gear-change told me that he was thoroughly experienced. That 100 miles is through some of China's lushest farmland, green as the richest parts of Devon, but with the warm humidity of a forcing house. In this part of China there are 1,000 people to the square mile, and the clouds roll off the Tibetan plateau to spill on the lowlands, where every inch is farmed with the close care of market gardens.

At Ya-an the country changes as though a knife had been drawn across it and range after range of craggy mountains tower away beyond the city until they are lost in the distant haze. Over there, a few miles further on and a few miles higher in the sky, the population is only two people to every square mile. Ya-an, always an important trading centre, has now become the marshalling point for east-west convoys of lorries, and the population has grown from 20,000 to 70,000 since the new road opened. There are new warehouses, theatres, cinemas and shops, big Skoda buses from Czechoslovakia and metalled roads. Much of the older building is half-timbered and this, with the arched stone bridge which marks the beginning of the highway, gives the impression of an English country town where everyone happens to be Chinese.

But still the town preserves the air of a trading centre on one of the old spice caravan routes. Its warehouses have a smell blended from aniseed, seaweed, chillies, herbs, musk and saffron. There are factories making tea into the hard bricks preferred by the Tibetans. Girls sit making up packets of that weird Tibetan medical speciality—worm grass—so called because if picked at the proper time it is half worm and half vegetable. There are pods of the musk-deer, worth their weight in gold; warm, indestructible yak-wool; fine furs from the high plateau and many sorts of herbs, all going eastwards. To the west, on their

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way to Tibet, go thousands of tons of tea, spices that will not grow in Tibet, silks like cobwebs and stiff brocades that will stand up by themselves, new printed cottons from Shanghai's textile mills and manufactured goods ranging from thermos flasks to tractors.

Modern shops on the main street display in their windows petrol engines, motor-cycles, enamel bath-tubs, telephone switchboards, British, Czech and German bicycles, cameras and watches, which are sold wholesale or retail to Tibetan merchants and visitors.

Anyone going to Tibet for the first time is well advised to spend a few days in Ya-an to get a breath of the Tibetan atmosphere, for the town is always full of lorry-drivers who know the latest situation of the weather on the plateau, now so close and three miles or so above your head.

In a small eating-house where I was having an evening bowl of my favourite peppered noodles in soup and a cup of hot Chinese whiskey, a young driver told me some of the characteristics and the do's and don'ts of the plateau. Driver Chu Wen-tien, now working for the State Transport Company, was a former driver for the Chinese army in Tibet and before that was a P.L.A. infantryman.

"Nearly all Tibetans are terribly religious," Driver Chu said, "and it's very easy to offend them without knowing it. If you walk round a prayer-wall or even a high monk in the wrong direction people may be offended." The proper direction to take in passing any object of religious significance is clockwise, and this is also the correct way to revolve a prayer wheel.

Chu whipped out a little tattered notebook full of Chinese characters and gave me a list of things to avoid doing in Tibet, more or less exactly as listed below:

Don't enter any monastery without the permission of the chief lama.

Don't point with one finger at any sacred image. If you must point, use the whole hand.

Don't use electric torches in temples.

Don't try to buy for killing any cattle that have been redeemed from slaughter previously by the monks or by other people. Such animals are especially holy.

Don't hunt or fish.

Don't turn your back on a Buddha or sit in front of a Living Buddha or high lama.

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Don't ask a woman who is her husband. A fair proportion of Tibetan women have several husbands and such a question from a stranger might be taken as a slight.

Don't be surprised if a Tibetan sticks out his tongue at you and shows both palms at the same time. This ancient Tibetan greeting is similar to the western handshake, because holding out both hands shows that no weapon is being concealed. An old Tibetan superstition also has it that a poisoner's tongue is black.

Don't touch the rifle or sword of a Tibetan unless you are on good terms and clearly have his consent. Weapons are the dearest possessions of most Tibetan men and many women.

Don't smoke or drink unless it is obviously a proper occasion to do so.

Don't ride a horse downhill. An old Tibetan proverb says that a horse which will not carry you uphill is no horse, and a man who rides his horse downhill is no man.

Don't go visiting during prayer times.

Don't refuse hospitality or any offer of food or drink. The Tibetans are extremely hospitable and would take a refusal as implying that the food offered was not good enough.

"No matter how full you may be or how much you may detest buttered tea," the driver said, "you should take a couple of good gulps. I like buttered tea very much, but some people think it's too salty. And another thing, if other people are eating with their hands, you should do the same or they will think you look down on them."

This young driver, who looked like a boy, had fought in the big battles in east China in 1948 when the Kuomintang's back was broken, he had helped to build the highest road in the world and then driven 100,000 miles along it without accident. He was still only twenty-three years old.

"Before we drove over these mountains most of us privately thought that petrol engines of this sort would not operate at such altitudes," Chu remarked. "We argued that there wouldn't be enough oxygen for the engines. Actually, I was one of the first to test this when I drove over Erh Lang Mountain, just up the road from here. At that time the new road was only just begun and it was so narrow that the offside rear tyre of my six-wheeler was sometimes over the edge. Even then lorries worked fairly well at those heights, though the rarefied air cut their speed and wasted petrol. But since

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then we have found many ways to improve the performance of the engines."

This was done, he explained, by small technical "research teams" elected by each convoy, normally from its best drivers. These teams had the job of collecting statistics on petrol consumption and any sort of new idea for improving performance. They reported to a technical group covering the entire road which tested each new device and saw that useful ones went into general operation. To get standard engines to operate efficiently at altitudes more suited to aircraft engines, high octane fuel and superchargers, they had to tackle problems of fuel feeding and cooling. Water boils at about 2° F. lower for each 1,000 feet of altitude and the boiling-point is often reduced to around 180° on the passes. One way of improving the mixture while climbing is to insert a small fan in the mixing chamber, driven by the suction of the intake pipe. For descending, a small adjustable port is cut in the intake pipe to let in more air and weaken the mixture. Extra cooling surfaces are made by inserting coils below the radiators.

We slept under mosquito nets for the last time at Ya-an, which lies almost at sea-level; and the next stage was the crossing of Erh Lang Mountain, a treacherous peak of friable rock that stands as a barrier before the foothills of the Tibetan plateau. By Tibetan standards, the pass over Erh Lang is not high—only twice the height of Ben Nevis—but it is a bad and dangerous mountain, rained on or snowed on most of the year, sheer and crumbling. It is nevertheless the best entrance to the plateau, and for that reason was also the pass chosen by the old Chinese Red Army under Chu Teh, now Vice-Chairman of China, during the Long March twenty years ago. One of China's most popular current songs is about the success of the road-builders in driving a road over it.

When Driver Chu had first gone up the road it had not been wide enough at some points for all his rear tyres, and to gain an inch of width on that friable material the whole perpendicular face of the cliff above had to be cut back for hundreds of feet. Now as it weaves back and forth in dizzy hairpins it is wide enough to take two lorries passing at any point, but work is still going on, widening and reducing curves and gradients, cutting culverts, improving bridges, while convoys of lorries constantly pass in both directions. Gradually the rivulets that lace it like the veins of a leaf, the threat of cascading rain and melting snows are all being brought under control.

As it spirals up into the clouds, the road has the colour of very

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strong, milky cocoa and it follows a river of the same colour, full of soil. It is typical of this notorious mountain that at one point the only way to get the road through was to take it underneath a waterfall which arches over the traffic and plunges far below into the gorge. Halfway up, a bridge had been washed away a few days before and traffic was filtering through over a temporary timber bridge which the maintenance staff had thrown over the stream in a few hours.

As the road climbs we pass from sunshine into drizzle. Soon the bamboo disappears and leaves fir and birch as we pass from steamy summer into chill autumn and finally into sleety winter. My jeep purrs along, much of the time in top gear, swinging round one hairpin bend after another with no sign of being affected by the altitude, handled with the skill of a racing driver by the P.L.A. man at my side, who waves greetings to lorry-driver friends going the other way.

We stop at the pass—the first pass on the road and the occasion for nips of vodka all round. Looking back the way we have come, rain-soaked forest folds like green plush until lost in mist, but a mile further on the air suddenly becomes light and transparent and the scene changes to downlike mountains, bare and bosomy, rolling out of sight without a single tree. Instead of bamboo, which is never seen again, there is edelweiss growing in masses and blue gentian so thick that, seen from above, it looks like lakes reflecting the sky. The road, now smooth and white, snakes down over easy curves, to a point a few miles ahead, but 8,000 feet lower, where a green river meanders over a valley with a toy town at its side. This is the Tatu River, looking so peaceful from above, but actually boiling along at something like twenty-five miles an hour; and the town is Luting, almost at sea-level again.

A desperate force of Red Army men twenty years ago fought their way over the iron chains of the old bridge in Luting after the Kuomintang troops had burned out the floorboards. A small group of volunteers crossed it hand over hand into concentrated machine-gun fire and took the opposite bank in one of the critical battles of the Chinese revolution. Now the old bridge is restored and used by foot passengers, but lorries pass over a new steel-cable suspension bridge half a mile outside the town. Until that was built, lorries had to be dismantled, manhandled over the swaying chain bridge and reassembled on the other side.

Erh Lang Pass was merely a foretaste. It is from Luting that the real climb begins up the Tibetan plateau. Following the spray-topped

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Tatu River up the mountains, we soon reach Kangting, stopping place for the night. If Tibet is the roof of the world, Kangting is on its eaves, "only" 9,000 feet up and a good place to spend a little time getting acclimatised to the rarefied air. Already it is hard to breathe and the few steps up to the first floor of Kangting's hotel is as exhausting as climbing six floors at sea-level.

Most of Kangting was wiped out in an earthquake in 1954, but was almost entirely rebuilt within a year. Earthquakes are so frequent and severe at this spot on the edge of the plateau that the capital of the autonomous chou[1] has been moved to Kanze further west. But I was too tired from the lack of oxygen to bother about such matters; as I lay in bed, a slight earth tremor set the electric light bulb swaying over my head—and I fell asleep watching it.

[1] An autonomous chou is an administrative unit that may be under an autonomous region or province. It may contain counties, autonomous counties or municipalities.

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CHAPTER THREE

THREE MILES UP BY JEEP

A monk at dawn—Matchlocks and electric stoves—Peasant boy to army general—Cattle feuds and forced labour—Tibet's substitute for pressure cooking—Above the treeline—Yaks—Kanze; two monks to one layman—
Om mani padme hum!*—Mechanised religion*

MY awakening next day provided the first of many surprises on the new road. From my bed I could see the first flush of pink on the tip of a nearby mountain and the golden roof of Kangting Monastery. Suddenly there was a crackle and a blare as the morning exercise music broadcast from Peking filled the courtyard with its familiar rhythm. Jumping out of bed, I looked down into the tree-shaded courtyard that separated the hostel from the Town Hall to see an assortment of people such as I never expected to see touching their toes at dawn. There were long-queued Tibetan men in bright silk robes, Gurkha hats and top-boots, earrings and daggers swinging as they did hip bends. Mixed with them were Han men and girls in plain cotton dress, the whole concourse moving in time, with an occasional tentative arm or leg going in opposition to the majority. But the surprise was the monk outdoing them all for vigour and enthusiasm. His rosary clattered up and down his arm as he bent and straightened, and his toga-like robe kept slipping off his left shoulder, but he was grinning and cutting his movements clean in real Swedish drill style. Like the rest of the exercisers, he was on the staff of the Kanze Chou.

Kanze Chou is the most westerly 60,000 square miles of Szechuan Province, with a population of half a million people, mostly of Tibetan nationality. At least one in five of the males is a monk. In spite of the overwhelming majority of Tibetans in the area, it is not part of Tibet proper, which begins much further west. Kangting city, the gateway to the Chou, has been for 2,000 years the ethnic frontier town, trading centre and meeting-place of the Hans and Tibetans who live together in about equal numbers in the little bilingual town.

It is always full of herdsmen, clan lairds, huntsmen and their womenfolk, independent and proud. They come into town with their cattle, butter and wool to sell and to buy town-made goods—the men with

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long black hair, untrimmed, matted and dusty, great sheepskin robes like dressing-gowns, with the fleece inside, pulled up to knee length under a rope girdle through which is usually thrust a straight, wide-bladed sword in a metal scabbard, often of chased silver. Even in bitter cold they wear the right arm free of its sleeve, leaving the shoulder naked, though some wear rough homespun shirts. Their skin is darkened by the sun and their eyes crinkled at the corners. Most of these weather-hardened nomads carry rifles of great antiquity, many of them matchlocks imported by the East India Company 200 years ago, fitted with long prongs of antelope horn as rifle-rests. They seldom waste a charge of powder and ball once their quarry is in the sights.

A mountain torrent which goes boiling through the town has recently been harnessed to develop water power, and there being no coal, much of Kangting's cooking is done by electricity. This is still unusual for China as a whole. There are a few State shops, schools and a big new hall serving as a theatre, cinema and dance-hall. Otherwise Kangting is still pretty much what an English country town of equal size must have looked like in Shakespeare's day: carts for collecting night soil, every drop of water carried in kegs on people's backs, a general lack of haircuts, handwoven clothes of uncertain fashion, wide-brimmed hats, and monks everywhere.

For all its remoteness, Kangting was regarded as of sufficient importance by the British to keep a consul in the city for many years, though what business he would find to do with its 15,000 people is hard to tell. One of them, Eric Teichman, "chanced to find himself stationed in Western China when hostilities broke out between Chinese and Tibetans on the border in 1918",[1] and made himself a go-between in the dispute. It was not easy to locate the former British Consulate in Kangting. Everyone had forgotten where it was, but finally an old native of the town took me to the house, wood-built and therefore still standing in spite of earthquakes and now converted into a nursery school.

Kanze Chou is of great interest especially because it is an area that has never been reckoned as under the rule of the Dalai Lama, but yet is ethnically Tibetan, with a similar social system based on the ownership of the land and herds by the monasteries and tribal nobility. Since 1951 it has been self-governed by a council consisting of twenty-three Tibetans, two Hans, one Yi and one Moslem, roughly

[1] E. Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet.*

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conforming to the proportions of these nationalities in the area; a method of government which grew out of the situation that developed when the Chinese army sent Chiang Kai-shek's forces fleeing from the district in 1950 and a good many Tibetans fled too—not knowing what to expect under the new régime. An appeal was issued by the P.L.A. to the nobles and leading monks to come and see for themselves what was going on, stressing that minority peoples were entitled to autonomous government under the new laws. Shak Dodon, one of the leaders of the powerful De-Ge tribe—biggest in the whole area—and Bando Dorje, one of Tibet's wealthiest merchants, came back, and brought with them many other monks and clan leaders. They had long discussions about the Communist Party's policy toward minority peoples and personally investigated how the Chinese army was behaving. These investigations apparently satisfied them, because early in 1951 they formed a committee which called several representative conferences and in the same year set up an autonomous local government.

This local government thus became the first to begin tackling the complicated problems of gently transforming Tibet's ancient society into more modern forms. I discussed how this delicate process was developing with Vice-Chairman Sonam, the only Tibetan lay commoner I met in my whole stay in Tibet, who was playing a leading part in government work. Sonam is one of the commonest Tibetan names and means "peasant". This young leader—still only thirty-eight years old—had been a herdboy in this part of the plateau when the Chinese Red Army passed through on the Long March twenty years before. Now, as we sat together drinking green tea while he ticked off his facts on his fingers, quoting masses of statistics without referring to a single note, he bore little likeness to the shaggy-coated, illiterate herdsmen in the street below.

When the Chinese revolutionary army had passed through the pasture-lands where his family struggled for a living, Sonam had been a lad of seventeen facing a future of looking after a handful of cattle for someone else on the grasslands. The struggling, starving remnants of the old Red Army, forerunners of the People's Liberation Army that was to sweep Chiang Kai-shek out of China fifteen years later, told young Sonam how they had fought their way thousands of miles across China to avoid annihilation, told him of the aims of the Communists and took him with them when they moved on.

"I decided to go because I thought, being so young, that my family would not be punished if I ran away," Vice-Chairman Sonam said,

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"I was wrong. They drove my parents, two brothers and sister off the land in revenge for my action, though I didn't hear of that until many years later." Tough as they are, even Tibetans who joined the Chinese revolutionary army found it nearly impossible to survive the rigours of the march, fighting all the way, without food, often eating nothing but grass, till they reached Yenan, where Mao Tse-tung and the other Communist leaders set about consolidating and expanding their forces.

"I was absolutely illiterate," Sonam continued, speaking the Han language as though born to it. "I did not even speak standard Tibetan, but only a local dialect hardly understood outside our valleys. I did not know—in any language at all—the words for such simple things as 'rice-bowl' or 'chopsticks'. So you might say that I am an example of the Communist Party's long-range training. It was work, school, work, school, alternately. Out of an ignorant superstitious herdboy they made me able to tackle even such a job as this. I am one of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of such people that the Communist Party created from such unpromising material."

Sonam had risen to the rank of general and, when the Chinese army began to drive the Kuomintang out of Sikang Province, had been sent to work in the Kangting region. He had helped to overcome the initial fears of the local Tibetan leaders and form the Tibetan local government. I asked him how they had set about the work of government.

"Our two biggest headaches were clan warfare and *ula*," Sonam began. (*Ula* was a question I was to meet in every part of Tibet. It is an untranslatable term for the traditional obligation to provide free transport and other unpaid labour service, such as fetching water, fuel, and building houses for monks, officials and nobles.) "The prime need," he went on, "if we are to raise the standard of life of the people here is to raise the output of the land and herds. Clan fighting and *ula* interfere with both these aims. The immediate job was to get the leaders of the clans together and talk about their quarrels. Some of these went so far back into the past that people had forgotten the original cause of the feuds. We called several conferences of clan leaders, monks and some peasants and herdsmen. Our local government was made up of twenty-three Tibetan nobles, one Moslem, one Yi and two Hans, so there was no question of anything being imposed from outside."

After long discussions at these representative conferences, the nobles agreed to stop making war on each other and also that quarrels which could not be reconciled would be submitted to local government

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arbitration. "Of course that didn't stop feuding overnight but it gave the local government a big lever," Sonam said. "In five years we have settled 1,808 big and little disputes. Two were cases of major warfare between two regions, twenty-one were family feuds and there were scores of cases of cattle rustling.

"Next we tackled *ula*, a very delicate matter, for this has a long tradition; but we made a start with the local government. From the beginning we paid the ordinary commercial rates for all government transport for officials and materials, labour and services. Nobody objected to this," Sonam said in answer to a query, "because the Central authorities in Peking would bear the cost and more money would come into the district."

Wiping out official *ula* had unforeseen results. In discussing *ula* objectively for the first time, it became no longer possible to go on regarding unpaid service by the peasants and herdsmen as part of the natural pattern of life, as a service owed by the lowly to those of higher station. Nothing was changed legally, but it became socially regarded as discreditable to use *ula* and certainly to abuse this privilege. Some nobles followed the government's example and began to pay for services formerly taken as a right; others reduced the levy voluntarily.

"The picture is not uniform," the vice-chairman went on, "but it is generally better. Some nobles who work officially in Kangting have given up *ula*; some have given up part of their land and herd dues and a few have actually given some land to their peasants and freedom to work on it for themselves. These things are all matters for the Tibetan people here to settle among themselves and they are not told what to do. We set the example and try to help others to follow it."

This was preparing the background for better methods of production by ensuring peace and greater freedom for the labour force in the district. "Next we distributed, free of charge, 380,000 iron farm tools to take the place of the inefficient wooden ones in use here, and have also introduced about 8,000 more modern farm implements drawn by animals. In 1954 we introduced some six-row sowing drills. But the draught animals here are not very strong and it often takes two animals to pull what one horse can manage on the lowlands. Also people here are very conservative in their methods. It's going to take time, but we are using the State farm up the road to spread experience, and interest-free State loans in good quality seed to improve the strains. Loans like this have helped 1,855 masterless and landless families to get started on former waste-land."

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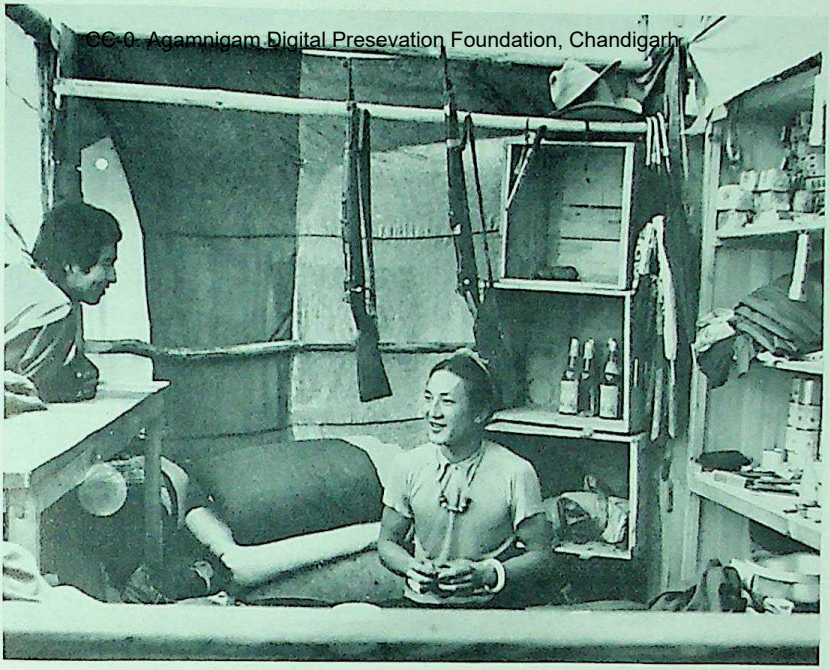

A new shop in Dzamu

Serf women of Bomi District

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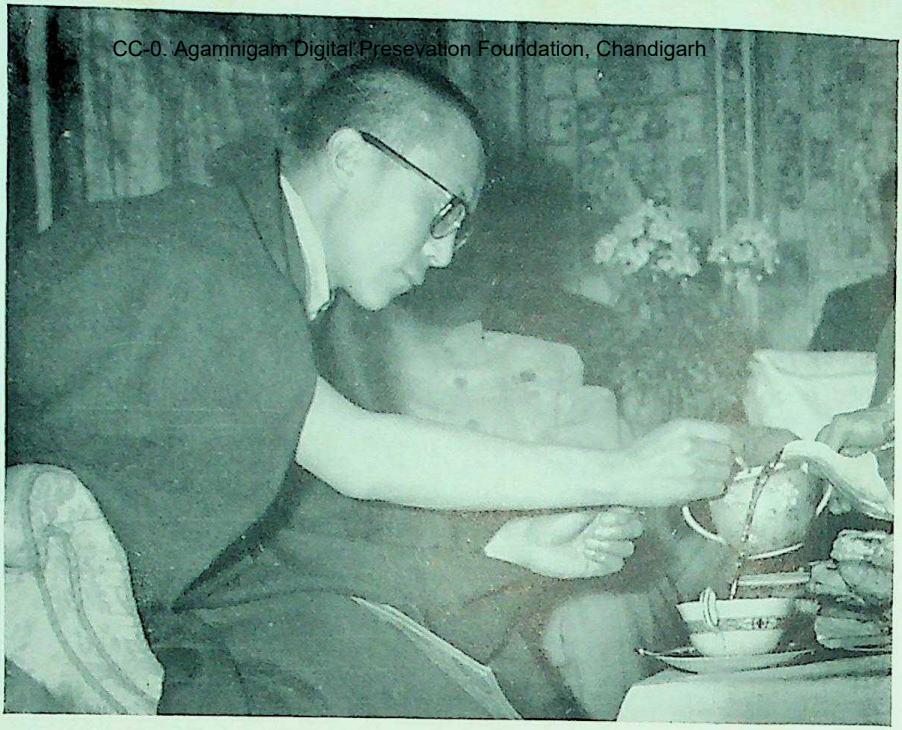
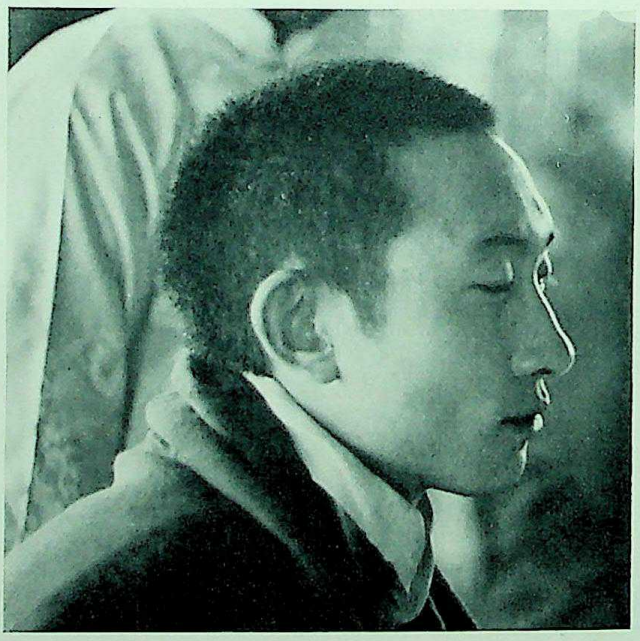


The Dalai Lama takes tea, British style



The Panchen Lama

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Still ticking off his facts on nicotine-stained fingers, Sonam reported that 300 veterinary workers in mobile teams were working on the pasture-lands, giving free treatment and epidemic prevention. (I ran across one of these teams later, camping out with all its bacteriological paraphernalia on a remote, rain-swept plateau and trying to convince conservative clan leaders of the benefits of inoculation.) "A big success," Sonam said, "has been the introduction of a new strain of sheep, a cross between a Soviet strain and the local breed, which produces more wool of better quality."

After returning to his own district, Sonam began to look for his family and finally located his sister, who was still very angry with him for getting the family into trouble by running away. He asked her to visit him, but she refused until she heard that the Dalai Lama was going through Kangting on his way to Peking. "That settled it and she came," Sonam grinned. "Then she thought I really must have made good if I could help her get a glimpse of the Dalai Lama as he passed. She forgave me then."

Before leaving Kangting I went to a dance at the local hall and danced with tall Tibetan girls from Kanze who were studying at the Kangting Institute for National Minorities. They were talking perfect Han and danced waltzes and foxtrots with the grace that comes naturally to these mountain folk. Next day, after a glorious hour or two wallowing in the hot sulphur baths near the town, I left Kangting and its earthquakes for the high grasslands.

We were two-thirds of the way up the great mountain barrier that stands guard before the real plateau. Leaving Kangting, the climb continues along the river, which gradually dwindles to a trickle and disappears before reaching Dza La, the 15,400-foot-high pass that is the gateway to the grasslands. The road climbs smoothly without difficult bends or steep gradients. My squat Soviet jeep purred up much of it in top gear with smart racing changes on the bends, but we had to stop halfway to fill the radiator with cold water—and how cold—from the glacial stream.

At this altitude water boils at such a low temperature that you can dip your hand quickly into a bubbling saucepan without getting it scalded. A soft-boiled egg takes about ten minutes, and when we stopped for lunch the boiled potatoes were floury under the skin but hard inside. For foreigners this is one of the problems of the Tibetan plateau. Boiling water is not hot enough to burst the starch grains of potatoes, rice and beans, so that everything needs very long

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cooking over fires of dried dung, which is not the hottest of fuels.

Tsamba is the Tibetan answer to these problems and is the universal staple food. In its basic form, *tsamba* is a finely ground, creamy-coloured flour with a somewhat beery taste, made from the thick-skinned barley that grows on the uplands, though not above the tree-line. Sand is heated in a pot, the barley grain is dropped into it and popped. Then the sand is sifted out and the grain ground, after which no more cooking is needed. At meal-times, the Tibetan reaches into the pouch formed by the fold of his gown above the belt, pulls out the bowl he always carries there, pours in some tea, soup, barley-beer or whatever liquid is available and then heaps *tsamba* on to the liquid. This is gradually kneaded into a dough with the fingers, rolled into balls and eaten. Non-Tibetans find it difficult to manipulate and to swallow. On my trial run I found my fingers stuck together with a lumpy glue that took a good deal of sucking off and which stuck in my gullet. The Hans say of it: "*Chih pu pao*"—"It does not satisfy the hunger." But the taste is pleasant and beery and the Tibetans prefer it to any other staple. In this country of vast distances to be travelled on foot in remote places, a leather sack of *tsamba* and a flint and steel make a Tibetan a self-supporting unit able to survive independently in the bleakest places. For others, what Tibet needs is pressure-cookers.

Houses in this region reflect the clan warfare I had been hearing about: square three-storied buildings in open ground with walls 3 or 4 feet thick of local stone mortared with mud, shooting slots and windowless ground floors in which the animals live. A ladder made by chopping notches in a tree trunk leads up to the next floor from the mire on the ground floor and can be drawn up at a moment's notice. A similar stairway leads to the roof, which is flat, walled round to breast height, and roofed over. This covered roof is also the threshing floor, grain store and straw loft. The whole is designed to withstand a siege—a miniature medieval castle.

Not far from Kangting is the State farm mentioned by Sonam, established by the P.L.A. to grow food for themselves on reclaimed land. When they moved on, it became the first of a string of experimental farms along the road to test various crops at high altitude. It has Hungarian and Soviet tractors, combine harvesters and seed drills to farm its 1,500 acres.

As the road climbs, the trees get fewer and more stunted. Pine disappears first, then silver birch, leaving juniper to fight a losing battle with gnarled and scrubby rhododendron for last place on the

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tree-line—and then there is nothing but grassy highlands and bare rock. The road spirals upwards, turning back on itself, running along the mountainsides like a wide shelf, until at one turn there is a great heap of small pebbles (to which each devout passer-by adds a stone in prayer for a safe journey), some twigs with fluttering prayer-flags and the brand-new white signboard of the road administration giving the altitude and distances to the next towns in each direction. Now we are entering a new world where the road averages thirteen or more thousand feet above sea-level and mountain passes of 16,000 feet are little ones.

Here, at three times the height of Ben Nevis, were flowers—stubborn, short-stalked, hairy but still recognisable varieties of homely English flowers, gentian, daisies and tiny forget-me-nots with blossoms no bigger than a pin's head, growing among masses of tiny, furry edelweiss. From this height it could be seen that Tibet is no flat plateau. Endless ranges of peaks billowed away into the distance and out of sight in purple-grey gauze as though, at a moment of fearful storm, a grey-green sea had been solidified with incredible icebergs standing in it—mighty giants thrusting up perpetually snow-covered peaks. On some of these the rock was too sheer for the snow to grip, and it showed through, wind-polished purple stone.

We plunged down, expecting to spend all day climbing and descending, but the road weaves almost level for 160 miles, finding its way between grassy hills along flat-bottomed valleys thick with flowers through which the rivers always keep company with the road. We had descended quite a distance below the tree-line again and there was a diversity of scene and climate like a world tour in a single day: through Arizona, the Rocky Mountains, Switzerland, the German forests, the Lake District, Devon and Iceland.

Already the yak is seen everywhere; herds of the shaggy, distant relatives of the American buffalo graze on the plains, sniffing each clump of herbs for the best-scented and also to evade the deadly aconite. Without this beast-of-all-trades there could never have been a Tibetan civilisation, though outside of Tibet good specimens are seldom seen even in zoos, because they pine below 7,000 feet. The yak is usually black, sometimes piebald or grey and often white-faced, with hair hanging in a fringe along its belly, tufts below its knees like a poodle, and a heavy fly-whisk tail which is exported to India for this purpose. With their sharp, wide horns they ought to have a fierce appearance, but there is something so palpably docile about yaks that

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even on the first encounter you have no hesitation in walking straight into a herd.

No amount of coercion will make yaks go faster than their regular one and a half miles an hour loaded, though when unloaded they gambol and whisk their tails like kittens. They simply do not care about the weather so long as it is cold. Feeding them costs nothing but the time they take to forage, they need no attention and at night are merely tied in lines to yak-hair ropes lightly staked to the ground.

For all their size and seeming clumsiness, they can go almost anywhere with a load of 1 cwt., carried in two packs on a crude saddle. They plough and tread out the grain. Tents made from their belly hair are weatherproof and last fifteen years. The finer hair makes an untearable, everlasting cloth used for clothes and top-boots which have soles of raw yak-hide. When they are alive they give milk for butter and cheese; dead they provide excellent beef. Yak-dung is the only fuel in the grasslands and is sold even in cities for a high price. It burns reluctantly and is blown into flame with bellows made from yak-skin. If you want to cross a ferry in Tibet it will usually be in a big flimsy coracle of yak-hide stretched on light wooden frames, weighing about 150 lb., but able to transport a ton. Yak-horns are used for building and most Tibetans have a snuff-box made from the tip of a horn with a little plug in the sharp end.

They took no notice of my jeep, which was running sweetly and not at all as though it had risen above its element and considerably above the height of most aeroplane routes. The clouds were high overhead and not, as might be expected, lying on the ground. Sitting in the car, there was no sense at all of being miles above the heads of ordinary people at sea-level. We breasted another pass and began the run down to Kanze.

Any description of the approach to Kanze on a day of bright sun would be trite by comparison with its stupendous reality. There is, first of all, the vastness of the approach from the top of a mountain 4,000 feet above the city. Every turn of the road brings some new scenic marvel, set in a horizon of twenty, fifty, one hundred mountains. What seems at first to be a single snow-peak slowly turns round and unfolds into a glittering, spiny, albino dragon lying over the land and disappearing far away.

In the dustless thin air, sunlight of a new brilliance intensifies every colour: the towering clouds are whiter and the everlasting snow whiter still, the barley-corn is gold of purer carat, the rivers more coldly translucent green, the dazzling sky bluer, the range of vision wider and

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the whole spirit has an uplift not to be found in the thick air of the lowlands.

Eight miles of level plain before Kanze are filled with waving grain, square fortress houses set in tall birch thickets and, long before the golden roofs of the monastery catch the sun like mirrors, great vultures, the carrion-eating lammergeyers, can be seen floating far overhead, borne without effort on invisible pillars of air.

Kanze more than lives up to its distant impression. What was until five years ago a typical medieval town—monastery, fortress and market-place—is now two towns. On the outskirts are new white houses, offices, shops and halls built since the P.L.A. arrived. Under the shadow of Kanze Monastery, which sprawls up the hillside behind, lies the old town, built of crumbling rammed earth, so weathered that where the soil ends and the buildings begin cannot be distinguished. Though there are still many miles to go before reaching Tibet proper and Kanze is actually in Szechuan, this is an authentic Tibetan town, peopled with characters of long ago. Knights in gaudy silk cloaks, armed with swords, wearing embroidered top-boots, with wide-brimmed hats on their coiled plaits, clatter by on jingling horses—rather like a scene from England in Chaucer's day,

In this locality the women's hair is done in numberless small plaits as thick as blind-cord, drawn together low down on the back. Their faces are daubed and spattered with dark brown *kutch* to protect the skin from the plateau's merciless sun and wind. They do most of the field work, and this is not surprising considering that most of the males are monks. Kanze is the capital of Kanze county where there are forty-nine known monasteries, and maybe some more in remote valleys not yet listed. A recent census showed that there were 36,931 people of all categories in the county. Of these, 17,421 were males and of the males 12,097 were monks—two out of every three males. But of the 19,510 women, only 400 were nuns.

Kanze's streets are always full of monks of all ages and classes: wealthy monks in the finest claret cashmere: poor monks in patched and tattered homespun that may once have been dyed red; monks of three years old and impudent boy monks, playing knucklebones and kites, being cuffed for disobedience by their mothers. Many of the stalls on the streets are conducted by monks, some on their own behalf, some for the monastery. They haggle and bargain and exchange secret code "talk" about prices by touching their fingers together, with their hands hidden under a strip of toga.

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Adobe houses rise tier on tier, their flat roofs stacked with grain and straw, until at some point the red-and-white buildings of the monastery, far bigger than the town itself, take over and continue up the hillside, up to the golden roofs whose sunlit blaze tries to outmatch the mountains to the south. Like every Tibetan town and every Tibetan family, Kanze is partly in and partly out of the monastery. But the part that is in dominates the part that is out, physically, economically and socially. A noble is a noble, but a monk of equal rank takes precedence. A lad from the grasslands, if he is a monk, is at least striving to Buddhahood and must be deferred to.

Business and religion are intertwined. In the market-place monk and lay merchants haggle with customers, telling their beads and muttering the formula which is met in every corner of Tibet, "*Om mani padme hum*"[1]—"Hail to the jewel in the lotus!"

This phrase is the equivalent of the *Paternoster*—"Our Father, which art in Heaven"—the Buddha often being depicted seated in a lotus flower, symbolic of heavenly birth. Religious merit is acquired by the endless repetition of this phrase. Nor is it necessary to repeat it. If the phrase is seen with the eyes or made to move and send its message winging to the gods, merit is also gained. This is the nature-worship basis for the incessant turning of prayer canisters (until recently the sole use of the wheel in Tibet), fluttering prayer flags, prayer walls on which the "*Om mani*" is repeated thousands of times, the carving of this device on rocks by the side of rivers, caravan tracks, bridges and buildings.

Passing up the main market street of Kanze I saw an open door into an unlit vault in which a prayer barrel, at least 8 feet high and 6 feet in diameter, was being turned on great pivots by a monk walking round beside it, the stone floor having been worn to glass smoothness

[1] Pronounced "Om marnee padmee hoo!"

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in a circle by naked feet. Tibet, one of the least mechanised countries of the world, has the most mechanised religion. Such prayer barrels contain the "*Om mani*" invocation printed as closely together as possible on the thinnest paper which is compressed and hammered into the prayer barrel, so that such a barrel may contain the prayer millions of times repeated. Each time it spins that number of prayers goes to the gods. I never quite understood why people counted beads, spoke the phrase or used the relatively inefficient hand-canister turned centrifugally by a weight, when a few spins of such a vast barrel would multiply the phrase many more times.

The Chief Living Buddha of the monastery, which is a very large one with 2,000 monks, wore the badge of the Kanze Autonomous Government and was director of its Kanze office. On the wall of his room were a silver-mounted dagger, portraits of Mao Tse-tung and Sun Yat-sen and an oleograph sun going down in an oleograph sea. Living Buddha Dzungsa is a modern who owns a jeep and went to a P.L.A. hospital for a year to cure a fistula that had resisted every cure known to Lamaism.

Several hundred pupils are now attending the town primary school, which is teaching modern subjects—the first non-clerical education in Kanze. Landless peasants who reclaim land get certificates of possession from the local government, tax exemption for five years, free tools, seed on loan without interest and low-interest loans for buying cattle and for starting spare-time occupations. A family which had no land before gets nine iron farm tools; and one which had a little land gets a minimum of five tools for reclaiming more land.

A few miles out of Kanze some of these families have opened up an arable district where formerly there was only empty waste. In 1954 they opened up 50 acres of land and got 17 tons of barley, some of which they sold. With this money and government loans, they bought a total of ten oxen, two horses, fifteen pigs, twenty-four sheep, fifteen yaks and six milch cows. Since then they have opened up another 50 acres. All these families were formerly the poorest type of tenant, mostly living as hands hired by other tenants—or homeless beggars. One of the oldest of them, who acted as spokesman, said that the nineteen families of Rusi, as their new village is called, had also earned a sum equivalent to £640 in subsidiary occupations, such as weaving, digging herbs for sale and making carpets.

These were some of the 1,855 resettled families mentioned by Sonam and probably the most well-to-do labouring people in the whole district.

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Chapter Four

SERF-GIRL AND QUEEN

Over the worst mountain—The sins of marmot-trappers—Lhasa bus—Serf-girl to public administrator—Scriptures and sheath-knives—The Lady of De-Ge

DRIVERS and "old hands" on the Tibetan road always speak with awe of Chu La, the pass over Bird Mountain. Until the road was extended beyond Lhasa, Chu La was not only the most dangerous but was also the highest part of the road. Now there is one higher pass, but Chu La remains the most dangerous. This is not because the road is badly constructed, for all that it clings to sheer walls of stone as it clambers up to 16,600 feet and then drops 5,500 feet in a few miles. North and south of the pass, the mountains in the same range are covered with perpetual snow; but nature smiles—damply—on Chu La for two months of the year, when there is no snow but incessant rain instead. At any time the traveller is likely to be overtaken by snow, dense mists, rain clouds, pelting rain, frost that turns the road into a twisting ice-rink with a sheer drop on one side. It needs good driving to maintain the standard expressed in the notices posted on many lorries: "100,000 kilometres without accident."

On the day I crossed, Chu La wore a humid smile. It drizzled all the way up, getting colder and colder. At the foot of the last steep rise there was a stop at one of the road hostels for lunch (hard-boiled eggs, potatoes in their jackets, tinned Australian butter, bread, cakes, jam, fried peanuts and Nescafe). Outside on the rain-soaked grass was a small Tibetan tent, two mournful tethered horses and two people sitting round a smoky yak-dung fire. A boy from the tent joined them carrying a leather sack of *tsamba*, and the three of them sat there in the soaking Scotch mist, eating their uncomfortable meal. They were a family of marmot-trappers, and doing well in the summer, for there are myriads of these little hibernating rodents on the uplands. But killing is one of the deadly sins of the Lamaist code, owing to the belief in the transmigration of souls, so the trappers barter their hopes in future lives for *tsamba* in the current one. In the winter this family occupied itself making images of pigs and cattle, which they sold to

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butchers; the stone images placating the gods for the sins of the butchers and adding up merit for the marmot trappers too, they explained.

Just as we were leaving for the climb up to Chu La, a blue jeep came splashing into the hostel forecourt and out got no less a figure than Bando Dorje, one of the founders of the Kangting local government, member of the Chinese National People's Congress and Vice-Chairman of the Chamdo local government. He said that he had just come from Peking and was now on his way to Chamdo and then to Lhasa for talks about setting up an autonomous government in Tibet. We left him eating, but he soon passed us in a spatter of gravel as we stopped to admire the blinding white glacier that feeds Hsinlu Lake, where a new rest-home overlooks a view that cannot be beaten in Switzerland.

Chu La sticks into the sky like a knife blade, so steep that the position of the road cannot be seen from below except on rare occasions when a lorry pops out from nowhere and disappears again into the mountain as it rounds a hairpin bend far above. The road is an engineering miracle, built by men who clambered down the sides of sheer cliffs on ropes to drill and blast, hanging over gorges where now the road can be seen distantly as a fine thread laid along the bottom. Every rock has its drill hole and explosion point. As we went up the weather cleared and from the pass, far above the tree-line, the road could be seen coiling down and down to the plateau, 5,000 feet below but still two and a half miles above sea-level.

Prosaically, as I breathlessly walked from one side of the pass to the other, to get every possible aspect of the view, the public bus came chuntering up the mountain full of cheerful Tibetans and Hans on their way from Chamdo and Lhasa. It stopped at the pass and some Tibetans got out to throw prayer stones on the cairn. Then they got back again and the bus went off, its roof loaded with luggage under a big tarpaulin. Somehow, even more than all the lorry convoys, this cheeky bus, nearly 17,000 feet up, seemed to signify the end of Tibet's remoteness and "mystery". Few tears were being shed over this by its Tibetan passengers, who prefer buses to horses, however romantic.

A beautiful, talented Tibetan girl told me the story of the Chinese army's advance over Chu La and the building of the road as it had appeared to Tibetans. She was the daughter of a poor blacksmith who was press-ganged by the Kuomintang army and worked to death; after which her mother had to eke out a living by herding cattle. Her

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name was Jume Bajang, twenty-five-year-old serf of the thirty-five-year-old chieftainess of the De-Ge tribe, Lady Janyang Bomo. When I met her she was studying at the Chengtu Institute for National Minorities.

In appearance Jume Bajang is typical of a sizeable minority of Tibetans; with wide honey-coloured eyes, high cheekbones, full lips and an aquiline nose with dilated nostrils. She was tall and erect, with permanently waved hair and a fringe down to her eyebrows. She was the only Tibetan girl I saw with such a hair-do—clearly a modern at first sight. She enjoyed telling her story and she was obviously enjoying life. For her everything was new and wonderful, including arithmetic.

"We first got the impression that the P.L.A. was all right because as they got nearer, the Kuomintang soldiers suddenly became very polite and went around as though they had never done any harm," she said. "I hated them. They got more and more jittery and started to throw away their uniforms. They surrendered in herds."

One of the leaders of the De-Ge tribe who had helped the old Chinese Red Army when it was in the district, made an appeal for people to help the P.L.A. by collecting fuel in the mountains. Bajang's mother agreed that Bajang could go. "So I rounded up all my friends and we collected a lot of wood. They paid us well too," she said, speaking fluent Han and smiling all the time. "When I worked for the P.L.A. I got the feeling of a different life. They treated us as equals and called me 'Little Fatty'. I was not so tall then. I felt that I could never go back to the old life and I talked it over with Mother. I was bringing in good money too. So when the army went forward I asked if I could go with them as a stretcher-bearer. They said, '*Yamu, yamu,*' which means 'Good' in our language. I was with them in several battles, but the army soon went too far ahead and they asked me to organise transport for them.

"Chiang Kai-shek's soldiers made us provide transport free but the P.L.A. paid 3 silver dollars for a stage of thirty-five miles, and the same on the return trip. It was very easy to get people to provide animals when they were getting such high pay but difficult to organise because of the boundaries. We had to be changing animals all the time." Tibetan traditional transport methods did not permit animals to pass beyond the tribal areas. Yaks belonging to one estate could not pass the boundary of another estate, partly because this meant a loss of grass to the owner of the area over which they passed, for a single yak

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eats nearly a square mile of grass a year; and partly because of the *ula* system. Nobody wanted to take an animal 1 inch further than was necessary under the system of unpaid carriage for officials.

Money was the means to break this formerly inflexible rule, for the P.L.A. paid for every pack carried, and money dissolved tradition as it has so often done before. And the P.L.A. instituted a system of guaranteeing full payment at market prices for every yak that was lost or died on the journey and organised "Mutual Help and Unity Contracts" between different yak-owners to decide the value of yaks and settle grazing rights. After this, Bajang said, yaks travelled thousands of miles from their starting points and the whole transport went very efficiently.

At first, she went on, families provided yaks individually, but this was wasteful. There were too many people looking after too few yaks. "We organised teams so that if a person had yaks but could not go with them himself or send a member of his family, we would look after them and pay him a slightly lower rate.

"There were other worries, such as leaving the children at home by themselves. So we hired baby-minders, and paid them out of the transport money. In a kind of co-operation, I suppose. I took all the payments. Some people worked who had no animals and others sent their yaks when they could not come themselves. We worked out the fairest rates of pay, everyone was better off, and the P.L.A. got more transport."

Yaks from Jume Bajang's district crossed Chu La and went much further. It was such hard going in the winter that even the yaks sometimes refused to move, and lay down in the snow to get out of the wind. "We used to cry sometimes, because we were so cold and hungry," said Bajang.

In February, 1951, she was named as a model transport worker. She showed me the badge on her robe, and said: "It was the most exciting time of my life. There was a meeting to set up the new Kangting government and I was invited. I didn't know why, and it was a shock when I had to go up to the platform and receive an award as a model worker. When I got home I showed the medal to mother and she went rushing round to her mother. They said they'd never heard of such a thing as a model worker—especially a girl. Mother said: 'Never forget that the Kuomintang killed your father. You must help the P.L.A. and be guided by them.'"

I asked her to tell me about the social position of her family.

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"My family," she replied, "belong to the De-Ge tribe and so we are under Janyang Bomo, the Lady[1] of De-Ge. We cannot move from the land we occupy without the permission of Janyang Bomo and we have to give her labour service and rent. Every year after the harvest we have to pay barley and butter and deliver it by the fixed date at a place two days' journey away."

"And if you did not or could not pay?" I asked.

"Gaol," she said. "At least gaol, but very often flogging. People commonly got several hundred lashes. But such punishments have stopped since the P.L.A. came."

I asked her about *ula*.

"If a tribal official or a government official or anyone with the proper papers passed through, we had to carry him and his equipment to the next boundary, providing the animals and our own food, all without payment. Now there is no government *ula* and the nobles claim less *ula* than they used, though they still have the same rights. My family still has to gather fuel without payment. But now we pay only half of the taxes we used to pay and there is no gaol if we are late."

Bajang's brother had been a monk, but had quitted the monastery, she told me.

"Was it easy for him to leave?" I asked. "And why did he want to leave?"

"He wanted to get married. Most monks would like to marry, but they aren't allowed to. My brother made up his mind to leave. To get him out we had to promise to send another brother—my half-brother—and my monk brother had to promise to do some unpaid services for the monastery for the rest of his life."

"Doesn't that seem to leave a balance on the wrong side?" I queried.

She laughed. "It all depends on the future. My little half-brother is only one year old. There's plenty of time to worry about him. As for the other one: whether he does the service all his life will depend on him as well as many other things. There are big changes going on, you know. After all, five years ago who would have said that I would now be studying here, reading and writing in two languages, learning about foreign politics and mathematics? I was a dirty, illiterate serf. Now I'm training for administrative work."

This raised the question of how she came to be at Chengtu studying.

[1] The title *Jyelbo*, which means something like Rajah, was conferred on the chief of the De-Ge tribe in the early part of the eighteenth century by the Manchu Dynasty.

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"Did you get Janyang Bomo's permission to come?" I queried.

"No, I did not," she said smiling.

"Then won't you get into trouble?"

She answered with the Chinese equivalent of "let the future take care of itself".

She said that when the road-building was over, she had still wanted to return to her village, so she volunteered to work for the Women's Federation in a different part of De-Ge. The area covered by the De-Ge tribe is very large indeed, consisting of five counties, partly in Szechuan Province and partly over the river in the Kham district of Tibet.

"I visited women, especially mothers and pregnant women, to try to get them to attend the clinics. There was nothing to pay, but they were superstitious about it. They all go now, but in those days they were scared," she explained. "I remember a woman in Yange village who had a great carbuncle, always running pus. Her husband was a blacksmith. He sold all his animals and other things to pay the monastery to pray. But she still had this thing. So I managed to persuade her to go to the clinic. It was two days' travel, but she was cured in no time by penicillin."

"Didn't the monks object to the people going to the clinic? Wouldn't this cause some loss of income?" I enquired.

"Oh, no," she said. "The monks go themselves. Of course, they say that people who go to the clinic should pay more attention to earning merit by prayer and gifts after they have been cured."

As we drove down from Chu La to the plateau, I remembered my conversation with this remarkable young woman, because a few miles ahead was De-Ge Gonchen, headquarters of the tribe and seat of its ruling lady.

At the foot of Bird Mountain is a monument erected to the memory of a P.L.A. man who died while the road was being built. Then the road passes through a series of perfect little alpine gorges with fir trees clinging to perpendicular walls of rock, wherever a seed has found a crevice to lodge in a speck of leaf-mould.

De-Ge Gonchen means "The Big Monastery of De-Ge" and the town consists of the great lamasery, the lord's castle and a village of adobe buildings for the commoners. It is a famous place, for here is a printing shop with ancient wood blocks of the best and most important Buddhist scriptures. Although the monastery is of the Sagya (Coloured) Sect, and not the Geluba (Yellow) Sect which rules Tibet, anyone who wants a good legible print of these scriptures has to order it here.

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In the monastery's main building are many rooms filled with shelves containing hundreds of thousands—perhaps more than a million—long hardwood blocks on each side of which is carved a page of the Lamaist scriptures.

Most of these blocks are 500 years old or more, and the most complete and important are those of the Buddhist *Kangyur* (The Commandments) which has 108 volumes in the De-Ge edition and the *Tengyur* (The Commentaries) which has 200 volumes. A complete set of the printed volumes needs a big caravan of yaks to transport it.

Tibetan books are not bound. Each volume, about 2 feet long, 8 inches wide and 3 or 4 inches thick, is kept between wooden covers, which are often exquisitely carved. When they are read the loose pages are turned up, so they are printed in opposition. But in fact they are seldom read. They have intrinsic religious value and are widely used for lining the walls of chapels and tombs. The walls of the Dalai Lamas' tombs are lined with them, end on: a 2-foot-thick insulation composed of all the knowledge worth having, according to Lamaist scholasticism.

This print-shop, which must be quite profitable, is the hereditary property of the head of the De-Ge tribe and at present belongs to Janyang Bomo, the Lady of De-Ge, chieftainess of the tribe and liege of the serf-girl, Jume Bajang. I asked for an audience with her and she most courteously came to meet me with two of her "cabinet" members, to show me personally to the castle. This is a rambling, stone-built fortress next to the monastery, in true Tibetan style with sloping walls, windows wider at bottom than top and a fringe at the roof of end-on willow twigs dyed with red ochre. This curious addition, reserved for people of the highest rank, has from below the appearance of russet velvet.

Lady Janyang Bomo is tall and slender and apparently no more than thirty-five years old. Her bearing and presence are those that can only derive from a lifetime of giving orders and being obeyed. She smiles slowly, a detached smile from under wide eyelids that slope downwards at the outer edges. A calm, clever and peremptory woman. Her two councillors followed her with a mixture of deference and familiarity.

She led the way, erect and graceful in her floor-length dark-green robe, under the battlements, through a courtyard and into the entrance of what could have been Glamis Castle in the days of Malcolm. Occasionally turning to smile and wave me on, she went through corridors sometimes of solid tree trunks, planed with an adze and

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painted, sometimes of rough finished stone, the silver sheath of her dagger swinging against the back of her thigh as she strode.

The entrance to the audience chamber led us past storehouses where whole carcases of yaks and sheep were hanging and where smoke-blackened villeins grinned at me with white teeth as they scoured great copper vats. The chamber itself, glass-windowed, was entirely lined with panels painted and lacquered in red, gold and bright blue. Her throne was painted in similar colours and over it hung portraits of the Dalai Lama and Mao Tse-tung. Around a long low table were seats of descending height, suited to the rank of her advisers, until the last was nothing but a 1-inch thick pad covered with carpet for the lowest of all. Since she was not in council, and as a mark of modesty and courtesy Lady Janyang Bomo took that humble seat and gracefully waved me into the high one opposite. Her council members stood throughout the interview, constantly taking snuff, which they shook on to their thumb-nails from polished snuff-boxes made from the tips of yak-horns.

Her dead husband's family, she told me, could be traced back for fifty-one generations and had owned the print-shop for 500 years. She herself was a daughter of the lord of the Moshin tribe and, when her husband had died, she had reluctantly been persuaded to become regent for her son (now fifteen years old and, as he later told me, "dying to join the P.L.A.").

Monasteries and wealthy private laymen are the chief customers for the print-shop, she told me. They place orders and are served in rotation. "We do not print too many because the blocks are very old and historical. They are the most complete in the world, in fact." Orders for editions also come indirectly from many parts of the world, for these blocks are well known to all experts on Buddhism and Tibet.

As we talked, a shaggy-haired servant, coated with grime from the kitchen, poured milky sweetened tea while Lady Janyang Bomo herself passed dishes of sweet cheese, dried apricots, biscuits and confectionery from India and Shanghai.

She estimated that there were 70,000 people in the De-Ge district, which makes hers one of the largest of the Tibetan tribes. "There are thirty hereditary clan leaders under me and under them are some eighty smaller leaders. From the thirty, I select four whom I consider the ablest to be my ministers. I call the thirty together when necessary to discuss the appointment of ministers and later secure the endorsement

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of the monastery. With my ministers I discuss important matters, such as settling disputes.

"We have no definite division of work in the council of ministers, but there is some customary division," she explained. "For example, Shak Dodon, who, like myself, is a Vice-Chairman of the Kanze Autonomous Chou government, deals as a rule with military matters. Minister Gena here deals with household matters." Gena bowed: a solid, beefy man of perhaps her age, with his plait wound round his head. Lady Janyang Bomo is also a Vice-Chairman of the Chamdo regional governing body, though she said that ill-health had prevented her from playing much part in either of the local governments.

"There is no doubt that prosperity has come with the liberation and the road," she said. "The road is helping trade."

"What does De-Ge trade in?" I asked.

She slipped her dagger from its sheath and held out the handle to me. "We are famous for fine blades in De-Ge. Swords and knives. Ours are known everywhere to be the best." I ran my thumb down it. There was no doubt of the temper and edge of that one.

"We also make good silverware in Beba district; and our wood printing blocks, of course. These are in addition to land and cattle."

I asked about the remuneration of the printers, cutlers and block-makers but, whether due to my own obtuseness or the difficulties of translation, I had no more information at the end of our discussion than at the beginning.

She and her council members posed for some photographs and then, with inevitable Tibetan courtesy, saw me to the road. Outside was her son—the future leader of the De-Ge tribe—far less interested in his title than in the inside of a jeep. And further up the road was a mechanised pilgrimage: a mixed group of monks and laymen setting off to Lhasa, the Holy City, in a lorry hired from the State Transport Company.

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CHAPTER FIVE

INTO TIBET

Time slips back—A town which never saw a wheel—Wooden ploughs —Armed population—Pilot town—Feuds forbidden—The problem of debt —Free tools—Trade is looking up—Monks prefer modern medicine—"Let go that louse!"

ONE small disadvantage of travelling in Tibet by motor is the lack of time to get acclimatised. A horseman or walker moves slowly and with some exertion from dense to rare air and back, but in a car the change takes only an hour or two, which does not allow time for the body to adjust itself. After crossing the Kinsha River—actually the upper reaches of the Yangtse—and entering Tibet, the mountains become literally "breath-taking" for one who had only been a few days on the plateau. This is not because they are higher than Chu La, but because they take longer to cross.

The approach to Chamdo is over three majestic ranges with very high passes: Ge La, Japi La and Dama La. Between the last two passes the road runs for a distance of thirty miles over plateau more than 15,000 feet above sea-level. I felt as though I was being slowly suffocated by an invisible pillow. Deep inhalations seemed to do no good. Yawns threatened to dislocate my jaw. Even the yaks along the way, scared by the jeep's engine, only kicked up their heels, cavorted a few steps with their bushy tails held over their backs and then slowed to their usual camel-like pace. It is not so bad while sitting in a jeep, but when we stopped for lunch at a hostel, climbing four steps into the dining-room reduced me to palpitating dizziness.

Travelling at forty miles an hour through the best scenery of a lifetime seemed wasteful to me and I was constantly tempted to stop the jeep and soak up the view, the unearthly light and the sunshine that seems so gentle in the cool air but after a few minutes burns as though through a lens.

Usually the road follows mountain rivers from wooded ravines upwards, the river always getting smaller until it disappears. Then I would know that there would soon be a pass, with its new white notice-board, cairn and prayer flags. Generally on some nearby rock was the inevitable "*Om mani padme hum!*" engraved and painted

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its appropriate colours. Once over the pass and coasting down, a new trickle of water begins over the upland stones, becomes a tiny stream half-hidden by massed gentian and daisies on the grasslands, and finally grows into another roaring torrent crashing through forest-lined ravines. Then the road crosses it, finds its way to another river roaring down in the opposite direction, and starts to climb again. There is no lack of potential light and power in Tibet to take the place of butter lamps and yak-dung. Wherever I slept, there was always the noise of rivers running over boulders, most of them at twenty miles an hour or more.

These rivers provide a problem for the Tibetans which they have most ingeniously solved. Since they are too fast for boats to cross and timber is scarce, many of them are crossed by thick cables of raw yak-hide. These are plaited very strongly and stretched from bank to bank. A hollow wooden tube sliding over the rope acts as a pulley and a crude harness hangs from it to which the passenger is strapped and hauled over by means of other ropes, dangling and swaying.

When the labouring jeep, water boiling in the low atmospheric pressure, finally crests Dama La for the run down into Chamdo, there is an almost sheer fall of about 4,500 feet down a road that must be one of the world's miracles of mountain road-building. It is a series of hairpins winding like a dropped rope down to a faraway valley and disappearing round a spur of rock. Dangerous as the road looks from the top, it is safe, wide and well-cambered, with good curves and an easy gradient that can mainly be managed by occasionally dropping into third gear, without touching the brakes. An ordinary Soviet "Victory" limousine can descend it all the way in top gear because of its low top-gear ratio.

I thought we had reached the plateau again when the road levelled out in the valley—but no, it turns the spur to the right and then goes on spinning down another hair-raising drop to the Lantsang River, the upper reaches of the Mekong in fact, on which Chamdo city stands far below, looking like a camouflage expert's model for testing designs. There is plenty of time to examine the city from alternate sides of the jeep on the way down. Like most Tibetan towns, it is dominated by the golden-roofed monastery, which was destroyed by Han troops in 1912 but is now completely restored. It stands on an elevation overlooking the rest of the town, at the confluence of two rivers. New white modern buildings already cover a bigger area than the crumbling adobe of the old town.

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Chamdo is the capital of Kham, most easterly of the three regions of Tibet. The other two districts are Ü, the area under the Dalai Lama, and Tsang, the area under the Panchen Lama. Kham is twice as large as the Kangting area, but has fewer people—about 300,000.

Time slips still further back here than at Kanze. Until the road reached this point in 1952, there had never been a wheeled vehicle, nor had the wheel any other use than for praying. Everything was carried on the backs of beasts and men, as much still is. There is no industry. Not that the Tibetan people lack mechanical skill. Two cantilever bridges at Chamdo are said to be the largest in the world built of timber on this principle. Water power is understood but used only for turning prayer barrels so that they may send their endless message to the skies. Wooden ploughshares are sometimes faced with a piece of iron, very light, for it is expensive. A peasant, if his luck holds, may get a return of five or six times his seed and retain about 40 per cent. of the crop.

Apart from the innumerable monks of all ages and social conditions, everyone carries a dagger, most men carry swords, and those who possess them carry rifles or ancient muskets. For some reason Tibetans do not like pistols. Local lords have their estates with fifty, 100 or 1,000 families and even, as at De-Ge, 70,000 people. Almost every family has some sort of firearm.

Until recently all peasants and clan members were mobilised by their overlords to fight bloody clan battles that often led to the annihilation of whole groups. This right has been voluntarily waived. Tibetan overlords also had the traditional right to amputate the hands or feet, hamstring or put out the eyes of peasants who ran away. If a peasant ran to another clan and was protected by it, there would be war to the death between the two clans.

Chamdo is a city of fantastic contrasts. It is an ancient city full of modern additions or a modern city full of anachronisms, depending on the viewpoint. In the old market-place, which is nothing but a narrow dirt street in which you have to step over sleeping dogs. Tall herdsmen with their cutlasses and daggers loll in the open windows of the shops, and rub shoulders with Hans in their plain blue cotton uniforms. Long caravans of mules jingle through the streets, the lead animals carrying bright scarlet plumes on their heads, made from dyed yak-tails. They dump their loads at a warehouse that has probably stood on the same spot for 2,000 years. Just round the corner is the marshalling and repair yard, biggest on the road, because Chamdo is almost exactly halfway

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to Lhasa and this is where lorries are changed and loads transhipped. There are usually several hundred lorries in it. Women, often nude to the waist when the sun shines, pack the flat roofs of adobe buildings and shake their fists at youngsters who playfully threaten to shoot them with air-rifles from a 10-yard shooting range run by a Han merchant.

Chamdo is so "quaint", so fascinating and bewildering to the newcomer that it is easy to pass a host of incongruities without noticing them because they are familiar to the eye elsewhere. It needs a conscious effort to notice that in this formerly wheel-less town bicycles are on sale from Czechoslovakia, Germany and England, and the little tailor sitting under an awning is using a Shanghai-made sewing machine. It is easier to notice the colourful monk than the very ordinary vacuum-flask he is selling. Such things could only come along the new road. Vacuum-flasks must travel rather badly on a yak.

One whole new area of the town, so big that it had to be built on the other side of the new steel bridge, contains such anachronisms as the People's Bank of China branch, the State wholesale trading company, the State department store—where I was able to buy some beer—and the offices of the State Transport Company. The retail store, the first and only department store in Tibet, was stocked with iron farm tools, bicycles, an enormous variety of foods and drinks, cloth, electrical goods, and crowded all day with people from the grasslands, who regard it only second to the monastery as a Chamdo "must".

In some ways Chamdo may be said to pilot the way that all Tibet will go in the future. Early in 1951, before the negotiations had begun between the Dalai Lama and the authorities in Peking which led to Tibet rejoining China, a People's Representative Conference was called in Chamdo. Tribal leaders, clan chiefs, Living Buddhas and most local leading personalities attended. From this was formed the Chamdo People's Liberation Committee, which is now the highest ruling body of the Kham district and is responsible directly to Peking. Since that time representatives of peasants and herdsmen have been added to the committee, but it is still predominantly composed of Tibetan monks and nobles.

Immediately after the committee was established the question of *ula* was raised. It was agreed that in future all government transport, including official transport in the twenty-eight *dzongs* or counties of the area, would be paid for. Nobody objected. After all, the government in Peking would pay. This measure was therefore agreed by the

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committee. It left the monasteries and nobility free to collect traditional *ula* if they wish, including fetching of fuel and water without payment. From enquiries I made around the town, I find that *ula* has disappeared in the city itself. No citizen is now willing to work without payment and some stigma attaches to unpaid labour. But this does not apply in the rural areas, though, as in Kangting, the effect has been to reduce the demands for *ula* in general.

Next, the committee absolutely forbade feuds and took the line that those who fired the first shots were responsible for all the consequences. If an old feud of long standing erupts, the committee steps in to prevent its extension. It also arranges that both parties contribute a relief fund for the families of any dependents that have been killed, and sees to the distribution of the funds.

New feuds, those which have developed since feuds were forbidden, are treated much more severely. Those engaged in them are arrested and sentenced, and the ones who started it have to pay compensation.

All people in Kham are now technically equal before the law. Arbitrary punishment, floggings and mutilation of commoners by their overlords, is no longer condoned and all cases are required to be heard before the *dzong* or Chamdo authorities. This is not to say that they always are, for it is a vast area with an almost totally illiterate commonalty. But at all events, arbitrary punishment or the improper taking over of land and herds can no longer be carried out openly. There are 368 council members of the People's Liberation Committee whose task it is to enforce the law in the localities.

One morning while I was at Chamdo, a delegation of twenty peasants came into town from the south to ask the People's Liberation Committee to arbitrate a dispute between themselves and the local monastery which owned the land to which they were tied. They claimed that the interest rate was too high and they were getting further into debt without any hope of getting out. Since they represented seventy families, the Committee considered that if there were no mediation there might be a conflict leading to bloodshed.

On this ground, the Committee sent a message to its members in that *dzong*, asking them to set up a local mediation committee composed of themselves and representatives of the monastery and the families concerned. If that failed to reach an agreement, representatives would go from Chamdo with full powers to settle the issue.

Debt has always been a problem here as in the rest of Tibet, for a single bad harvest may load a family with debts from which they can

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never escape. The average interest rate charged by the monks, who were formerly the only moneylenders, was about 20 per cent. a season —about six months. Most debts are contracted to carry out the sowing, when seed shortage results from a poor crop in the previous year. State loans in money are now being issued through the People's Bank, and in seed grain by the local authorities. These have amounted to about 800 tons of seed and 98,600 silver dollars cash in four years. At the same time the Committee is urging the monasteries to give loans at interest rates agreed with the authorities.

In an effort to popularise iron farm tools, the central authorities provided funds for a free gift of 60,000 tools in the area. This is a large gift in relation to the total population of 300,000, of whom only half are tilling the land. It comes to at least one tool per family.

I had a long talk one day with Sonson, a very lively merchant who is Chairman of the Chamdo District Association of Industrialists and Merchants—a forward-looking title, since there are as yet no industrialists in the area or anywhere in Tibet.

Sonson was a monk in the Kanze monastery twenty-three years ago, when fighting broke out between the monastery and the Kuomintang. "We had only rifles and they had cannon," he told me. "So we were defeated and forced to retreat to Chamdo. I was wounded." He rolled up his sleeve to show me a bullet wound. Sonson had come to my room at the new Chamdo hotel, dressed in a purple silk robe and wearing, as is common among wealthy Tibetans, a gold Rolex watch on one wrist and a rosary wound round the other.

He remained in Chamdo as a merchant for the monastery in Kanze, and became a foundation member of the Chamdo People's Liberation Committee.

"There is no industry in Chamdo," Sonson admitted, "but we have handicrafts and our copper Buddhas are well known as far as Szechuan."

He said: "Trade is fine, never better. After the road opened, the government lent Chamdo merchants 800,000 silver dollars at low interest. In 1953 the number of shops in Chamdo rose seven and a half times. Now we can use all our capital and work on a lower rate of profit with a quicker turnover. Have a look in the market. You can see rice, Shanghai cloth, farm tools, things we never traded in before. More stuff is being sold every day."

I asked him where the spending power came from.

"Since the road got here," he replied, "we can move local products into inland China faster and at better prices, especially wool, fritillary

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and musk. These things used to go to waste for lack of transport and buyers. In 1939 musk fetched only 10 silver dollars an ounce. Now it fetches 30 silver dollars. I used to have cases of silver dollars I simply couldn't use.

"Before the road came it took me thirty days to Kangting, with all the risks: losses from rain, animals falling over the precipices or goods lost in the rivers. I lost twenty yakloads of tea to bandits in 1948. Now we take six days to Kangting and no losses. There's more purchasing power, prices are down and we are doing well."

This was confirmed by the manager of the State Trading Company, which bought three times as much, in value, of local goods in 1954 as in 1953. "A peasant can buy eleven times as much cloth and three and a half times as much tea for the price of a pound of fritillary as he could buy formerly," he said.

Shiwala Living Buddha, Director of the Cultural and Educational Department of the Committee, told me there were now ten new primary schools with 463 pupils. In the past only the clerics were literate and there were no schools at all for laymen.

A common sight in Chamdo is a group of monks coming down the hill from the monastery and popping into the out-patients department of the Chamdo People's Hospital. This modern white building is the most popular innovation in the city. It was the first modern hospital in Tibet, established in 1952 by 100 doctors and medical workers sent by the central government. At first they rarely had a patient in their adobe huts, where packing cases served as beds and operating tables.

Tibetans in general do not believe that diseases, or even accidents, have natural causes, but result from the activities of evil spirits. A sick person pays a monk to pray for him. What medical monks exist, and they are very few, serve only the wealthy and other monks. Monks in any case do not preach or carry out any religious function among the people. They are the monopolists of Lamaism. Only through them can a person get help in sickness or acquire a safe transmigration by prayer. Payments for these services are among the perquisites of monastic life.

Distrust of both the Hans and their medicine was enough to keep everyone away from the hospital. But the medical staff had been sent to do four main jobs: set up a complete modern hospital with fifty beds with mobile medical teams attached to it; tackle the main diseases, especially venereal disease; train Tibetan doctors and medical workers; and organise large-scale health propaganda. They immediately began the construction of a hospital with departments for medicine, surgery,

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dentistry and X-radiography, with a laboratory, dispensary and wards for in-patients.

I have already mentioned the case of the Living Buddha at Kanze who was cured by the P.L.A. The monastery sent a banner in gratitude and the Kanze folk said: "The doctors sent by Chairman Mao have cured our Living Buddha." In spite of poor communications, news travels fast in Tibet and often gets well embellished in the process. It was the monks themselves who led the way into the hospitals. If high lamas could go, then ordinary monks could go too. And when the public saw the monks at the out-patients' department, they began to flock to the hospital for free treatment.

Now the hospital is flourishing and has two big clinics and five small ones under it. About 200 young Tibetans are being trained as hospital assistants, doctors and midwives, most of them from peasant and pastoral families. While I was in the hospital looking round, a young nun, sister of one of the Living Buddhas of the Chamdo Monastery, was having a tooth drilled by a Han dentist whose assistant was a young Tibetan former herdboy. Toothache was always diagnosed in Tibet as "worms in the teeth" and dealt with by sticking red-hot wires into the cavities. The waiting-rooms were packed with Tibetans of all classes, at least a third of them being monks. This fledgling medical service has provided 300,000 treatments since its foundation.

I saw one doctor examining a patient from whom lice were crawling on to the doctor's arm. He did not try to brush them off or even appear to take any notice. Later he told me: "We should never get the confidence of the patient if we objected. Their attitude to lice is religious." I was reminded of the tale told by E. Hucs, the Lazarist missionary, about the great Tibetan reformer Tsong Kaba, who was challenged to a debate by the leader of the unreformed Lamaists. Tsong Kaba did not look up while his opponent was arguing the superiority of the old rites but suddenly interrupted to say:

"Let go, cruel man that thou art, let go the louse thou art crushing between thy fingers. I hear its cries from where I sit, and my heart is torn with commiserating grief."

Hucs said that Tsong Kaba's opponent prostrated himself and acknowledged himself defeated, for he actually was at that moment trying to crush a louse.

But exhibitions and talks on hygiene are presented in terms that do not offend religious feelings. These are also arranged outside Chamdo city by the clinics, with the help of the local committee members.

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Veterinary work, however, is not going so well, mainly because it has to do with disease prevention. A Tibetan herdsman may be willing to waive his religion to save a sick beast but yet boggle at the notion of having needles stuck into a whole herd of healthy cattle. As a result, though there are seven veterinary stations, including a very large one in Chamdo city itself, so far only 23,307 animals had been inoculated in two years up to last autumn. The number of animals in Kham is estimated at 1,500,000 sheep and 500,000 cattle, so the difference between the success of this service and the medical service is great indeed.

In Tibet the Hans have a saying that covers all such contingencies: "*Man man ti lai*"—"Slowly, but it will come."

My hotel in Chamdo was on the banks of the Mekong River and in the grounds of the house once occupied by an Englishman, Robert Ford, who was sentenced on a charge of espionage in 1951 and later released. I looked over the outhouse where he was said to have kept his radio transmitters for communication with Lhasa and elsewhere.

In the same grounds is the centre of Chamdo's new social life: the big meeting hall and theatre attached to the hotel. I was lucky enough to be there on a dance night and found dancing a pleasant method of getting acclimatised to the rarefied air. A Szechuanese band produced fast, snappy waltzes and foxtrots for about equal numbers of young Han government workers and local Tibetan young people learning modern dancing, which is considerably and ineffectively frowned on by their elders. They like it and are good dancers. Nowhere do you find more graceful people than the Tibetans, or people more ready to smile and sing. We danced and ate peanuts and chatted in the Han language, which most young Tibetans here are learning. On other nights there are film shows, plays by local dramatic troupes and, of course, public meetings.

I have said that in some ways this part of Tibet may be piloting the way for the rest of Tibet. But this analogy should not be carried too far. Kham was formerly part of Tibet, but was separated by the Manchus and incorporated as part of Sikang Province. After the overthrow of the Manchus it was retaken by Tibetan soldiers. It was fought over by the warlords and by the Kuomintang. There is also reason to think that Kham and the Kham people were put in a somewhat subservient position to the rest of Tibet. Now Sikang Province has been liquidated, the eastern part being merged with Szechuan Province and the western part, the Chamdo (Kham) District, will incorporate

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itself in the Tibet Autonomous Region when it is established. Developments there will probably provide the Tibet Autonomous Region with useful experience for that future period.

Chamdo, like Ya-an, is set in a deep bowl of mountains, and they constantly pour their rain-clouds into it. I was not sorry to move on, especially since the next major stopping-point would be Lhasa. I left over the new steel bridge, passing a convoy of lorries also bound for Lhasa, now only five days' journey. Fifty yards away, on the old cantilever bridge of wood and stone, a caravan of yaks was moving in the same direction, careful step by careful step. If they were also going to Lhasa the journey would take them two and a half to three months.

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Chapter Six

THE WORLD'S HIGHEST ROAD

"It can't be done"—Vast virgin forests—Making a road where birds cannot land—Road specifications—Has Everest grown?—Hostels, hot baths and free tea—Falling population—Glacier that "blew up"—"Air burial"—Tibet's first workers—"Yama yamu"

"CONSERVATISM was our worst enemy. Our specialists said that the road from Ya-an to Lhasa would take a century to build," I was told in Peking by the man responsible for building and maintaining it. He was chief of the Sikang-Tibet Highway Administration, Lang Min-teh, originally given the job of pushing the road a distance of 1,413 miles, at an average height of 13,000 feet, across fourteen of the world's highest mountain ranges and twelve big rivers. "I am not an engineer," he remarked as he told me all about the road. "Perhaps things would have gone better if I had been. Perhaps not. If I had known more about the technical side of the job, I might have been as pessimistic as the technicians. Anyway, I know more about roads now than I did when I started."

Chinese engineers at that time, trained in western styles of contracting, simply threw up their hands and said there was no hope of building a road quickly to Lhasa. There were no facts available, they said, no data. Nothing was known of soil conditions. Petrol engines would not operate at such heights anyway, so if the road were built it would be useless. Lowland people could not work on the plateau because of the rarefied air and there were no Tibetans available for the work. "Besides, no one ever built a road at this height before," they said.

"And that was that," said Lang Min-teh, "or might have been if we had accepted their orthodox standards."

He went on: "I had very little experience, so I set about collecting what facts there were about the climatic conditions, soil and rivers. I asked our Soviet engineers here some questions. They had no experience either.

"But they made experiments which were useful. For one thing, after tests in the Soviet Union, they assured us that petrol-driven vehicles could operate at the heights we proposed to go and even

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higher. They also helped us define our technical policy, fix the route, educate our leading personnel and later came along and helped us personally with the section of the road from Chamdo to Lhasa."

Chamdo to Lhasa was the part of the road I was now travelling. It passes through Bomi,[1] an area of Tibet least visited by foreigners. Anyone who has ever passed through these relative lowlands of Tibet (averaging about 10,000 feet above sea-level), anyone who has seen the vast virgin forests and rich soil able to produce two crops a year, could never describe Tibet as bleak and desolate. But the handful of foreigners who visited Tibet in the past usually followed each others' footsteps along the route from Darjeeling to Lhasa, a few days' horse ride through bleak country. It is from these that Tibet has acquired its melancholy reputation.

From Chamdo the road follows an old trade route, high above the deep canyons through which the yellow Mekong plunges, through purple and green valleys, until it crosses Nian La at only 11,960 feet into scenery very much like many parts of England—with pollarded willows along brooks which border flat lush meadows.

Then it starts to climb the Lantsan-Nu (Mekong-Salween) divide and clambers up E La before making a dizzy plunge into the Salween gorges 6,000 feet below. From the pass called E La the road can be seen wandering down into the valley until it disappears into distant gorges. Somehow it weaves through a herring-bone network of tributaries to a stream which gets bigger every time we cross it until it becomes a rushing river pounding into the Salween.

I sympathised with the technicians who had thought the road would need a century to build. The country seems to have been hacked out by some celestial giant swinging an axe several miles broad. Vertical strata stick up like spines along the backs of monsters bigger than St. George ever dreamed of, sprawled over the landscape with their claws spread into the plains.

Most of the plains in Tibet must have been formed by the action of glaciers breaking down and grinding the rocks and then carrying them into dammed-up lakes which later drained away. Geologically speaking, this must have taken place recently, and since then the mountain torrents have sliced through this mixture of round pebbles mortared with mud so that now the rivers lie at the bottom of ravines cut by

[1] Pronounced "Bore me". This name is sometimes spelt "Pome" or "Pomed". The "Bhu" of *Bhu*tan and the "bet" of T*ibet* have the same root as this "Bo". Tibetans call their country "Bod" and themselves "Bodpas". Tebod means Upper Tibet, which is near the frontier first penetrated by Europeans who corrupted the sound to "Tibet".

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themselves. In other places the rivers have forced their way through sheer rocky ravines with sides often perpendicular and sometimes overhanging. In general the road follows the course of the rivers on a shelf cut out of the crumbly lake-bed or blasted from the rock.

Road-making machinery could only be used at the point already reached by the road. This accounted for the policy of making the road along its whole length at the same time to enable machines to get through, and then spending as much time as necessary to improve it.

Volunteer road-builders of the P.L.A. walked or rode on horseback hundreds of miles to their own scene of operations, relying on yak transport. They set up camps, some of which have remained to be rebuilt as hostels and road-maintenance stations. Clinics and hospitals which they established pioneered the way for the present ones.

I asked one of these P.L.A. road-builders, now doing a carpentry job in one of the new towns, how they had managed to make a road in four years which experts predicted would take a century.

"It's a matter of politics, not only technique," he answered. "I put it to you: after the Second World War, when Chiang Kai-shek had millions of troops and a mass of weapons, and we had practically nothing, all the military experts predicted that we were finished. But the boot was on the other foot. Chiang Kai-shek lost his men and his weapons because we were going along with history and he was fighting against it.

"When the Communist Party called for this road to be built, it was clear that there had to be a road, otherwise Tibet would still be isolated and backward and a danger to peace. Somebody would try to play tricks here, as in Korea. Some volunteered for Korea, some came here. Of course, there's no comparison; we only had to fight natural difficulties. But when you have thousands of people solving problems on the spot and all understanding the importance of the job . . . well, it gets done."

Crossing the Salween River posed a problem that could only be solved by one man risking death. At the point where the road had to cross the river to accompany a tributary westwards, a vertical outcrop of rock sticks out like a huge stone spearhead through the riverbed, entirely hiding what is behind it. There was no way round and no way of finding out what lay behind that blade of rock thrusting hundreds of feet into the air. Probably no man had ever been along this way before. There was no path and someone had to go and look.

This meant crossing the racing Salween far below this point and

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clambering along the opposite side of the ravine to a point where a 200-yard face of almost vertical and horribly smooth rock hanging over the river had to be crossed to get behind the obstruction. From among the volunteers, a P.L.A. man named Tui Hsi-ming was chosen for his athletic prowess. When I saw the place, and saw the small birds wheeling round looking for a clawhold on the rock, I could not understand how any man could cross it. But while his comrades on the other side held their breath, Tui Hsi-ming inched across and got behind the barrier. He reported that the road could go through if a tunnel were blasted through the barrier rock, and now a steel bridge drives straight into it and out on the other side. Above the bridge is a banner which says: "In the heart of the mountains and valleys there were brave men!"

Throughout this section the road could only have been built by men prepared to descend on ropes into ravines that make you sick to look into: down there they rigged up light scaffolds to hold them while they plied 14-lb. hammers and long chisels. Newcomers to the plateau found they could only strike a few blows and then had to rest. Much of the material was friable lake-bed, with a tendency to hurl boulders at the P.L.A. men as they drilled, charged, tamped and finally were hauled up while the cliff was blasted out.

Through all these difficulties a track was carved out, unsurfaced but good enough for bulldozers and air-compressers to be hauled over. At this stage civilian workers could join the work, and thousands of them are still there, widening the road, reducing gradients and straightening curves. We had to stop and wait several times a day for blasting operations and clearance, but in between such working points the road is much better than the previous section and forty to fifty miles an hour is possible for long stretches. Gradients are adjusted to attain engine efficiency at various altitudes. Above 13,000 feet the maximum gradient allowed is 7 degrees and below that altitude 8 degrees. Minimum radius for curves is 80 feet. These specifications were worked out for this terrain by Soviet engineers.

Chatting to some of these Szechuanese road-workers, I found they get two types of bonus payment above their trade union rate of pay. One for altitude is based on the height of the pass on their road section and is from 10 to 25 per cent. of their basic wage; the other, called "remoteness subsidy", is for distance from their homes, and also goes up to 25 per cent. On Sechi La, workers were drawing both at top rates—making a 50 per cent. addition to their wages.

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Soon after leaving the Salween River the road enters Bomi Forest and does not leave it for 130 miles. This is an area of huge glacial lakes, fast rivers, lush crop-land and great virgin forests of tall firs, birch and pine, juniper and rhododendron. Legend has it that a detachment of Chinese soldiers on their way from Szechuan to Nepal during the war with the Gurkhas in the late eighteenth century detoured into Bomi and were so attracted by it that they decided to stay. They married local women and nothing more was seen of them in Szechuan.

For a traveller, this is perhaps Tibet's most beautiful region; for a geologist, a dream come true; for road-maintenance workers, a ceaseless battle against nature's treachery.

Here is laid out the history of geological change since the world's skin folded and thrust Tibet into the sky; the giant upflinging of rock and its gradual breakdown by wind and water, heat and cold; the struggle between the mountains and rivers; the laying down of level plains by trapped glacial waters, only to be counter-attacked by rivers and the rivers in turn by the mountains flinging rock and sand to turn their courses.

Tibet is estimated to be a relatively new geological formation. At school I was taught that the height of Chomo Langma (Mount Everest) was 29,002 feet. In those days I always used to wonder whether that 2 feet was for the snow on top. Now its height is 29,200 feet. It has grown 198 feet since I was a boy. Having seen Bomi, I believe this.

Bomi has everything to worry the road-maintenance staff. Some of the mountainsides over which it runs are nothing but sliding sand and small stones; others are a sort of shaly rubble; there are underground waters that show themselves only when pressure of traffic brings them out and starts a rivulet where none was before; there are glaciers that hurl water, sand and boulders all together to destroy the road.

Sometimes, ahead of the jeep, fine sand and small stones would start sliding down into the road, and further up the slope more sand would start to run. The question was: would it be a landslide that would push the jeep over the opposite edge of the road and into the river boiling alongside? Whatever it was, nothing could be done but push the accelerator down as far as the winding road would allow and hope for the best. At such times I clung to the statement by the chief of this road section that nobody had been hurt in a vehicle by falling rocks or landslides.

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I noticed that a variety of devices were being tried to hold back the threatening sand and shale. There is plenty of timber in the area, and this is being used to make strong fences at the bottom and at various heights to check the flow of sand. Grass is being planted. Culverts carry the underground waters safely under the road and heavy sloping timber slipways have been built to carry the road safely under places where snow and rocks may slide down.

All the way from Ya-an to Lhasa there is a road-maintenance station every six miles. These are big bungalows which do double duty as headquarters and homes for the maintenance workers and their families.

Modern hostels, able to accommodate the staff and vehicles of big lorry convoys, have been built at three- or four-hour driving intervals all along the road. Here the drivers of the State Transport Company open up their camp-beds, unroll their quilts and eat and sleep without payment. On most occasions I ate the same food, consisting of rice or steamed bread to suit both southern and northern Chinese, and varied dishes of pork, beef, chicken, eggs and vegetables. Each person is supplied with one dish, soup and unlimited rice or bread without charge. Mostly they get together in groups and order different dishes which they share, Chinese style, and so get variety. There are canteens where liquor, cigarettes, sweets and other items are available at cut prices. Tea is free. It was surprising to go to a tap to fill a water-bottle and find that what came out was excellently scented China tea.

Another very pleasant facility was the hot sulphur baths. Tibet is full of hot springs and where possible the road stations have been built nearby. Baths are available big enough for a platoon and down to individual size, fed by an ingenious arrangement of wooden troughs so that cold water can be added to get the right temperature. It was certainly welcome, after a day of twisting and turning over the mountains and running through convoy dust and hot sun, to strip off and plunge into a bath as big as the average English room, full of bubbling sulphurous water, and let the aches of a day's jeeping float away while supper was cooking.

There's little hardship and even luxury in a trip to Lhasa on the new road: for anyone, that is, who can stand the rarefied air and is not afraid of climatic changes from one extreme to the other and in between in the course of a single day; who does not object to changing from shirt-sleeves to fur coat and back several times a day, wearing sun-goggles, losing the skin from the nose a dozen times and generally

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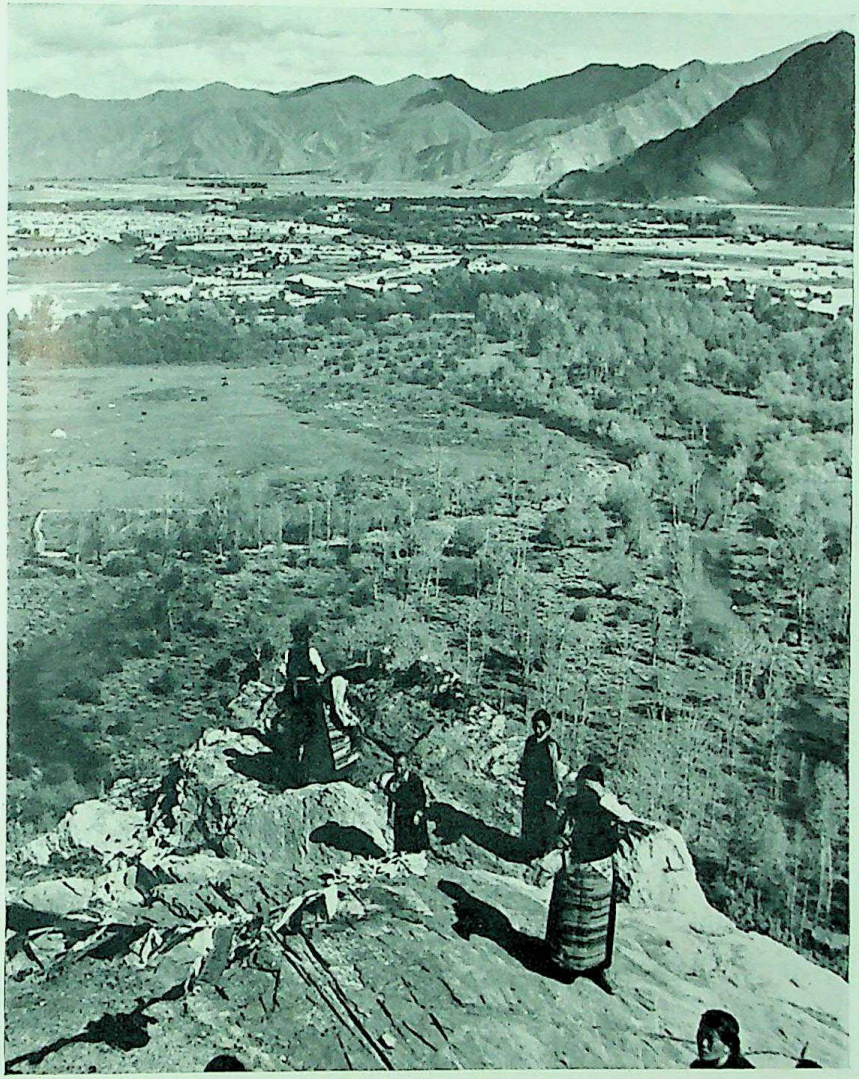

Women worshippers burning incense on Iron Hill

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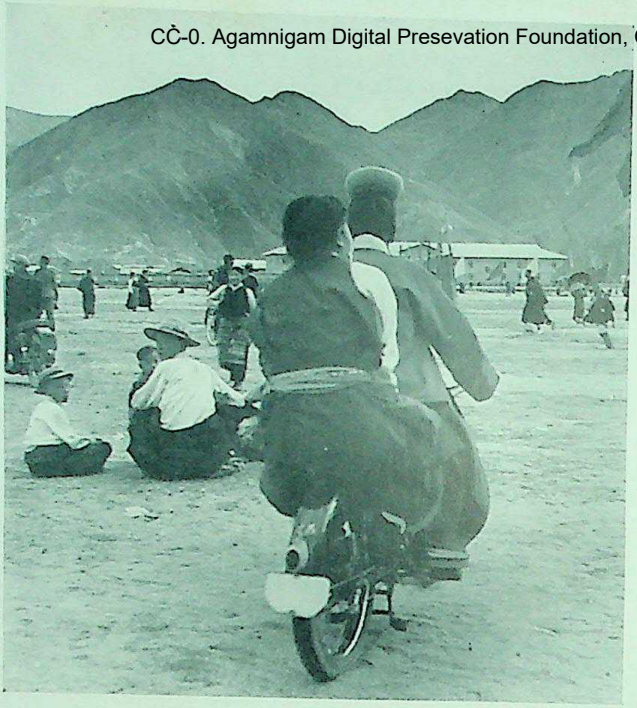
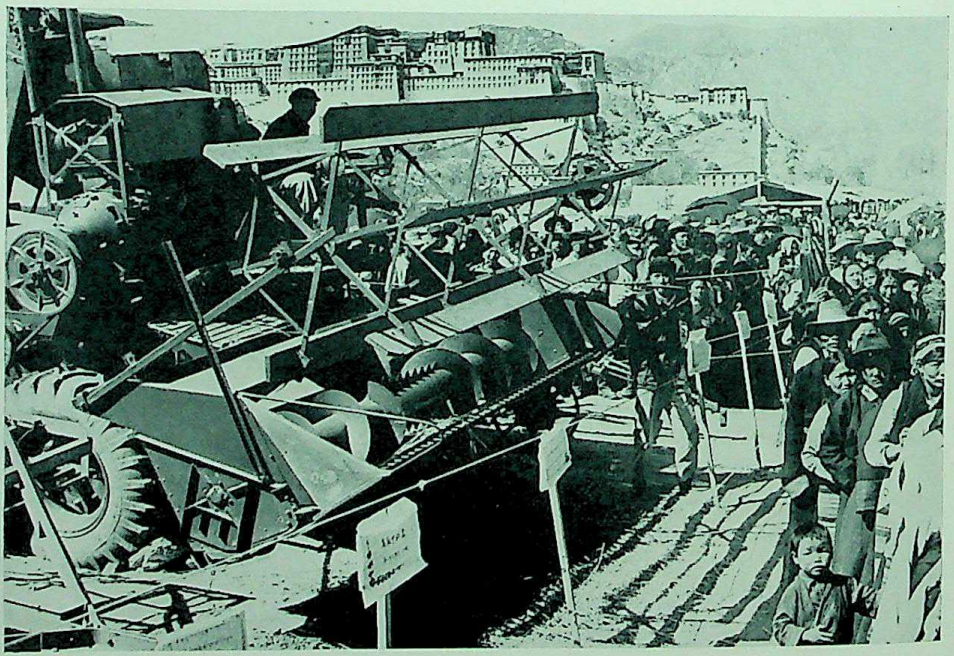


Tibetan official and girl-friend on motor-cycle

At the agricultural and science exhibition in Lhasa



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acting like a human guinea-pig in the laboratory of some maniac biometrician. Nothing is lacking for man or machine to travel across the highest road in the world.

Bomi, for all its potential wealth, is underpopulated to a greater degree even than other parts of Tibet. The population in general is declining and has been for centuries. In the heyday of Tibetan society, when a Tibetan army even occupied Sian, it has been estimated that the population was 12,000,000 (it is now about 1,000,000). Records of the population of Bomi, compiled by order of the Manchu Dynasty, gave the figure of 30,000, but now it is estimated at no more than 10,000.

All through this area are signs of villages that have disintegrated, leaving only one or two families cultivating a few of the terraces which formerly supported a whole community. In some places nothing remains except grass-grown squares and overgrown terraces. Old tracks are disappearing and the plateau is taking possession again. Many such places can be seen from the peaks, but disappear on the level in the same way that ancient British encampments can be seen only from the air. You can drive all day in Bomi without seeing a single house.

Side by side with the fall in population have gone unchanging productive methods and the growth in power of the monasteries and the numerical strength of the monks. It seems that the swiftest population fall has occurred since the reforms of Tsong Kaba, who forbade monks to marry or drink wine, among other things. For some 500 years, every day has drawn more men from the processes of production and reproduction.

In appearance and dress, the Bomi people are different from other Tibetans in the northern areas, where they have an obvious affinity to the Mongolians. In Bomi they have more resemblance to the Annamese. They dress differently, with shorter clothes, and their hats are small and perched on the back of the head. It is not likely that the people I met had ever seen a foreigner, but there was not the least sign of hostility.

Right in the heart of Bomi Forest, under the glacial peak of Chu Se La, a complete new town has been built from pinewood. Dzamu has, I fancy, something of the appearance of an American frontier town and a good deal of the atmosphere of the west in the last century. Its main street is a real main street, with shops on each side, some of adobe, some of timber and some merely tents. Here you can have a suit

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made, buy a rifle and ammunition, and have a haircut and shave, play chess in a restaurant and buy Kodak film from India or an Agfa from East Germany.

Merchants on their way to and from Lhasa and India camp at Dzamu, and the town is now becoming a new trading centre where people in dress styles from all over Tibet sit under awnings of white cloth with blue applique patterns, drinking buttered tea and haggling, settling accounts in Lhasa and Peking money and sealing the transaction with enormous pinches of snuff.

While I was in Dzamu, where I stopped to interview some of the road-builders, the lorry full of pilgrims that I had seen setting out from De-Ge caught us up and camped out near the road administration headquarters. Travelling Tibetans seem to prefer camping near the new road hostels. Banditry has almost finished along the road, at any rate during the daytime, but at night local amateurs or occasional professionals will attack a merchant's caravan if it seems an easy victim.

I found the mercantile spirit very strong in Dzamu. At one end of the main street I enquired the price of a roll of film—without any intention of buying—and was quoted 1 silver dollar, which I found to be the usual price in Lhasa. By the time I had reached the end of the street it had gone up by half-dollars to 3 dollars a roll.

A couple of young Hans came along with packs on their back. One had a monkey on his shoulder. They unpacked some stage props and bamboo clappers and spent an hour entertaining the town, seeming to do pretty well financially.

But Dzamu, for all its Wild West atmosphere, has more modern resources. There is electric power from a small hydro-electric generator and a big timber factory making prefabricated parts for road hostels and bridges. There is a fine large timber dance-hall and meeting-place, which is also used for plays and films. Ballroom dancing is the craze among China's youth and no place is now regarded as complete without its dance-hall.

An hour's ride west of Dzamu is the Gulan Glacier. Just after the road had passed this point in 1953, this glacier "blew up" and tore up several miles of the road. It suddenly hurled an incalculable quantity of water and boulders as big as houses into the Baluntsangpo River, and in a few moments the river was choked and a lake 160 feet deep had been formed. An hour later the water found a way out and forced the downstream level of the water up 60 feet above normal, ripping down the forest and changing the whole locality. A new route had to

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be found for the road and now a very careful watch is kept on the glacier.

I had a talk with an engineer, Chi Hsu-chun, who is probably the only man who ever went to the top of this glacier, where he found three mountain tops of ice 800 feet thick. Tibet's climate is getting warmer, according to his observations. He told me: "Local people say that twelve years ago this glacier began at a point half a mile lower than today. And even while I have been here the glacier has gone back." I also noticed many former glacier beds on high mountains which must have formerly been covered with perpetual snow but are now bare for part of the year.

From Dzamu it takes another full day of driving to get through the virgin forest, where trees grow upon trees as great trunks rot into the ground under a lighter pall of decaying twigs and leaf-mould. Dead trees that gave up the struggle maybe half a century ago still lean on their living fellows, and young trees are bent into bows by hoary dead monsters, leafless and black. Long strands hang everywhere like Christmas decorations and the ground is soft with ferns and flowers. Always there are bottle-green mountain torrents as the road follows the natural contours discovered by the waters. An icy mist emanates from these swirling rivers and chills to the bone when there is no sun. Cascades fall from precipices far overhead. Water-wagtails, pigeons, sparrows and blue-rumped magpies flit everywhere.

In one of the rivers I saw a human body caught between two rocks, stripped naked by the pounding waters and looking quite freshly dead. This was a "water burial", which is common in Tibet. According to Lamaism, the body must return to one of its elements, fire, air, water, soil. In most parts of Tibet fuel is costly and too slow-burning to dispose of a body and the ground is frozen for much of the time. This leaves water and air burials. It is therefore unwise to drink direct, without boiling, the water of the clearest brook. In "air burials", the bodies are simply cut into strips and fed to the ravens and vultures. Vultures are so tame and confident that they sit by the side of the road and watch traffic pass not six feet away, calmly turning their scraggy bald necks and baleful eyes.

Tibetans, working for wages, were widening and improving the road along the sections nearest to Lhasa. As we have seen, wages are an innovation in Tibet, work of any sort always having been a duty owed by the lower classes to the nobility and monks, and so these road workers could only be either people who had their overlord's

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permission to work or people without overlords. It often happens that a peasant family gets so saddled with debt that a thousand generations would not clear it and the family runs away to become *duichuns*—"black people" as they are also called. Such families usually settle on the land somewhere else and become again tied to the land in similar relations to those they ran away from—but without the debt. In some places as many as 50 per cent. of the peasants are *duichuns*.

But some of these masterless people find a way to go on being masterless, by begging or getting into petty trade, and a few who become wealthy may after some generations be recruited into the nobility or high posts in the monasteries.

The wages paid by the road administration are by Tibetan standards princely. Road-workers get as much in a month as a reasonably well-to-do landlord. Even a very wealthy Tibetan may have a real income of no more than £50 a month. High wages have encouraged even monks to doff their claret robes and go to work in borrowed home-spuns. They have also encouraged some landlords to send their underlings to work with orders to bring their wages back to their master. But it is pretty certain that a good deal of the money in such cases sticks to the fingers of the serf.

The difference in attitude between the Tibetan road-workers and the ordinary peasant serfs was most striking. Ordinarily the greeting of a Tibetan commoner is to stick out his tongue and hold his hands palms outward, occasionally bringing the hands together to the forehead and down again—an effusive and humble greeting. Road-workers are more inclined to clap and cheer, shout "*Yamu, yamu*"—Sinkiang Tibetan for "good"—and run alongside the jeep with friendly grins.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HOLY CITY AT LAST

Golden roofs of the Dalai Lama's palace—Tibet's history—Men came from apes—Tibetan king marries Chinese princess—How Lamaism grew—Monasteries become dominant—Rise of the Grand Lamas—Gods reborn on earth—Tibet, part of China—Imperial nibbling begins

THE approach to Lhasa from the east is of a beauty surpassing everything so freely offered earlier by Tibet. For sixty miles one valley opens into another full of flowers, birds, golden barley, blue and pink buckwheat—each valley a jewel strung on the twin ribbons of road and river. There is a feeling of drawing near some place of transcendent grandeur and strangeness. Clouds floating in a sky of deep blue cast moving patterns of coloured light and shade through the passes. The white-sand road follows the pale green river, squeezing past cliffs and out into the level valley bottoms again.

As we pass one mountain gorge on the left, a little rainstorm sweeps out, passes behind the jeep and leaves a rainbow dipping into the river behind us.

Houses become more frequent, set in graceful parks of slim birches and ash. Monks ride by on horseback with their togas folded on their heads against the sun. It is like driving in an open car in the days of Robin Hood. Peasants with long matted hair and dressed in unbleached, patched, shapeless and fashionless homespun lean on their mattocks or stick out their tongues in greeting as they watch the cars pass. Women with open bodices feed their babies or scream anxiously as daring little boys challenge each other to run in front of the car. A splash of colour in the distance turns out to be a noble lady out riding with an escort of three gallants, all in gleaming brocades. Their horse-trappings tinkle as they pass us, waving.

What seem to be motor cars on legs are square yak-skin boats being carried upstream by their owners whose belongings are strapped to the backs of trained sheep following behind. Ravens, huge and fearless, hop lazily out of the way, but mastiffs and mongrels go on sleeping, exactly in the middle of the road.

I strain my eyes ahead for the first sight of the forbidden city. But

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everything is black under a heavy rain-cloud. Then one edge gleams and the sun breaks out, lighting up the whole valley.

And there is Lhasa—Lhasa, the fabled, legendary Lhasa. There is the Potala Palace, a castle on a castle on a mountain, with rays of flame struck from its golden roofs, dominating the whole landscape and making even the mountains themselves appear insignificant.

By the roadside is a high pile of prayer stones cast by centuries of pilgrims in thanks for this first vision of the holy city. I had come 1,500 miles by car to reach this spot and it was a moment I shall never be able to forget; a moment when I could understand a little of the feelings of a pilgrim who has covered the same distance on foot and at last sees the Potala where the Dalai Lama lives, and knows he has reached his goal.

Before describing the historic city of Lhasa, it is as well to recall the history of the country of which it is the capital and of the way in which its unique system of government developed. There is no written history of Tibet and little is known of the situation there before the seventh century, but some outstanding events on which there is little or no controversy allow a skeleton of its history to be constructed.

Tibetan legend has it that the human race was born in Tibet, and in one aspect is not so far off the mark scientifically. Formerly there were no people, it goes, but only big mountains, oceans and wild beasts. Gradually the oceans went down and the land came up. A marriage between a monkey and a goddess led to the creation of human beings. The monkey, which was striving to attain buddhahood, went into a cave to meditate, and there met a female spirit of the rocks. After asking the advice of the Potala,[1] he was permitted to marry the goddess, and the offspring consisted of six small monkeys which the father took back to the forests. Within three years there were 500 monkeys and they went on increasing until the forest was not big enough to support them. At this point the father monkey went off to the Potala again, where he was given barley, beans and other seeds. The monkeys began to plant them, and gradually became men.

All this is said to have happened in the warm, forested area of Bomi. Another legend has it that the Tibetans came from a tribe of meat-eaters and blood-drinkers from the north-west, and a third legend that they came from the south. There are many different types of

[1] The Potala was actually built about 300 years ago, and the decline of the Tibetan people has been considerable since then. It is so obvious that present-day Tibetan society could not build such a place that most people now say and apparently believe that it was built by the gods.

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Tibetan, some even looking purely Persian, some like Annamese and Mongolians to lend substance to these legends.

Any serious attempt to probe back into Tibetan history always gets as far as King Songtsan Gambo, who was born in the early part of the seventh century. Before his time the Tibetan tribes were scattered, each with its own petty leader. Songtsan Gambo set out to unify the tribes under himself. He is described in the Tang Dynasty writings as strict and cruel but democratic. Before taking decisions, he would call people together and ask for opinions. His name means: *Song*, just; *tsan*, strict; *Gambo*, filled with.

This dynamic king drew together the young men and imbued them with martial spirit. In keeping with the social customs of his day, he respected his mother and women, but treated his father and older men with contempt. Today there are still remnants of this attitude of respect for women, and Tibet is one of the last places in the world where it is common to find one woman married to several men. Songtsan Gambo's code was that death in war was honourable but death in sickness contemptible. The noblemen of his day were those with several generations killed in battle. He was revered by the young men and created a strong tribe which conquered the others and unified Tibet by force.

Before Songtsan Gambo's time, the religion of Tibet had been that of Bon, a form of nature worship. Little headway was made by Buddhism in the two centuries before Songtsan Gambo. But when this king overran northern Burma and western China he demanded and got the hand of the Chinese Princess Wen Chang and at the same time also married a Nepalese princess. At this time, A.D. 640, the king was only twenty-three and his two wives were beautiful, intelligent and Buddhist. They converted him, it is said. His Chinese wife brought with her one of Buddhism's most priceless relics, a portrait image of the youthful Buddha said to have been miraculously made by the forces of creation. This image, originally a present from India to the Chinese Emperor, was housed in a temple specially built for it in Lhasa—the Jo Kang Temple—where it sits today, the holiest relic in Tibet.

Songtsan Gambo made Buddhism the official religion of Tibet, though what actually developed was a blend of Buddhism with the witchcraft of Bon. He also introduced many improvements into the country. Princess Wen Chang had brought with her an army of skilled artisans: cooks, wine-makers, builders, carpenters and painters. Her

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husband also sent Tibetans into China to study paper-making, ceramics and other crafts. According to the probably biased Tang records, Tibetans at that time had no cloth, but wore sheepskins and felt. Songtsan Gambo also sent a representative to India to study the scriptures, and the present Tibetan alphabet was created at that time. He also set about reconstructing history backward from his own time, and little credence should be placed in the history of the twenty-eight kings before his own emergence in the national and international scene.

Perhaps not everything attributed to the young king was actually his work. Because he was the most colourful and important of Tibetan figures, there is a tendency to trace everything to him. Certainly he wrought great changes in Tibet and established a kingdom that spread to Nepal, Bhutan and northern Burma. Tibet was then one of the most powerful military states in Asia. These were the golden days of Tibet's history and they coincided with the Tang Dynasty, which was likewise a peak in Chinese civilisation.

Both outside and inside forces contributed to a decline in culture and strength. Externally, India and China, which had played a part in Tibet's advance, themselves became static. But the main causes lay in the character of Tibet itself and the growth in power of the monasteries. It needed great vigour on the part of any king to maintain unity among the petty tribes and clans. Tibet is a land of valleys cut off from each other by high mountains, of pastures deserted except for herds and a few nomadic herdsmen. The few major towns, Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse and Chamdo, have today a population of less than 70,000 and those mostly monks.

Princess Wen Chang, who helped to found the monasteries in Tibet, thereby started up developments on the plateau which went far wide of her intentions. The monasteries eventually became the only places where there were large concentrations of able-bodied men, the retainers of the nobility being spread out all over the estates of their overlords. Rich and powerful monasteries developed with their own armed bands and challenged the declining monarchy.

Early in the tenth century an abortive effort was made to weaken the power of the monasteries. Most accounts agree that Lang Darma, last of the lay kings, killed his brother and headed the anti-Lamaist party in an attempt to smash the church. It is said that a monk from one of the monasteries destroyed by the King determined to assassinate him. Wearing black robes and riding a white horse blackened with

State Museum,
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soot, he managed to get close enough to the King to kill him. He escaped by removing his black robes and riding the horse through a river to remove the soot. This event is commemorated in the Black Hat Dance every Tibetan New Year, but there is more reason to think that the monks reshaped an ancient dance to fit their legend.

Tibet split again into warring factions and tribes, from which the church emerged as the most cohesive force. As the monasteries became all-powerful and the influence of Lamaism all-pervading, the nobles sent their sons into the monasteries. The mixed clerical-lay régime emerged.

After establishing the Yuan Dynasty by force of arms, Kublai Khan invited the leader of Tibetan Lamaism to Peking in 1260. This was Basba, leader of the Sagya Sect, who received from the Mongol Khan the title "Tutor of the Emperor". Basba went to Mongolia, where he helped to develop the written language, and then returned to Tibet, having been appointed ruler of 130,000 families in the Tsang, Ü and Kham areas. This sealed the dominance of the monasteries.

Tibet's second most famous figure—Tsong Kaba the reformer—was born of peasants in 1358, about a century after the Sagya Sect had established its power. By that time the Tibetan form of Buddhism had become less and less distinguishable from the original devil-worship, and Tsong Kaba began a movement for reforms, many of which have a striking resemblance to Catholic rites and practices. These included celibacy, spiritual hermitage, benedictions, cutting the hair, holy water, rosaries and high mitre-like hats for ceremonies.

Members of this Gelugba[1] Sect wore yellow hats to distinguish them from other monks, who wore red ones. Their most important rules were those against marriage and wine. The Yellow Sect prospered, and although celibacy provided a problem of succession, since a sect claiming to be celibate could scarcely have hereditary descent, this was solved in an ingenious manner. On the death of its leader his soul was said to have passed into the body of a child who then became the next Grand Lama. This convenient extension of transmigration—the passing of a soul into a specifically identified recipient body—provided an eternal Grand Lama.

By the time of the Fifth Body[2]—the "Great Fifth" as he is called—the Yellow Sect was in a position to challenge the supremacy of the Sagya Sect. They called in Gushi Khan to overthrow the older religion, and the Khan only too happily set about unifying Tibet under China.

[1] Sect of "Those on the Way to Virtue". [2] His name was Ngawang Lobsang.

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He covered the grave of Tsong Kaba with his own tent, which is still there, and handed political and religious power to the Yellow Sect. He also gave the "Great Fifth" the title of Dalai Lama. This "Dalai" is a literal translation into Mongolian of the Grand Lama's title, meaning "wide as the ocean".

This active pontiff made other innovations. He was informed by divine revelation that he was himself the reincarnation of the guardian god of Tibet, Chenresi, and so became the first god-returned-to-earth —the first God-King of Tibet. At the same time he had another revelation that his old tutor was also a god; the reincarnation of Opame, the other aspect of Chenresi. This tutor and his successors became the Panchen Lamas, the Grand Lamas of the Tashilunpo Monastery at Shigatse. Succession was by the same method.

Spiritually the relations between these two are not too clear, even to experts. Since Chenresi and Opame are different aspects of the same god, their incarnations are equal in a religious sense. However, it is considered that Opame is more concerned with the development of spiritual matters and Chenresi with worldly affairs. In fact, the Dalai Lama governs 109 counties and the Panchen Lama only ten. Temporally the Dalai Lama has more power, but their spiritual equality is evidenced in other ways. Whichever of the two is older is automatically the tutor and guide of the younger and ordains him. Tibetans make no distinction, calling them by a collective title, "Gyalwa Yapse", meaning "Father and Son".

Succession by reincarnation became general throughout the monasteries, and there are now perhaps 1,000 great and small incarnates in Tibet.

The successor to the "Great Fifth" was a lover of the fleshpots and female company who caused grave political problems for the sect and fled from Lhasa to die. Rivalry among the contending factions resulted and the Dzungarian Mongols took advantage of this to invade and occupy Lhasa. An appeal to the Chinese Emperor Kang Hsi led to the dispatch of 10,000 men to throw out the invaders. By 1720 the broken succession of Dalai Lamas was renewed. Unwilling to run such risks in future, the Chinese Emperor created the post of Amban, resident representative with wide powers, and from that time until the turn of this century there were Chinese Viceroys in Lhasa.

Trouble arose when the Chinese Amban put the Tibetan Regent to death in 1749 and there was an uprising. Emperor Chien Lung sent an army to restore Chinese ascendancy and, when this had been done,

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laid down that in future all appointments of importance in Tibet must be made by himself on the recommendation of the Ambans. At the same time he abolished the system of dual rule—the Dalai Lama in spiritual affairs and the Regent in temporal ones—and set up a cabinet of four Kalons, called the Kashag.

Forty years later the Emperor—still Chien Lung—sent an army to free Tibet from an invasion of the Gurkhas, who had conquered Nepal a generation before. They had got as far as Shigatse, the seat of the Panchen, when the Dalai Lama appealed to Chien Lung for help. Imperial forces drove out the Gurkhas and dictated a treaty in their own capital, which included their sending a tribute mission to Peking every five years. Stone obelisks still stand in Lhasa to the memory of these occasions when Peking came to the rescue. At this time Chien Lung ordered that the choice of the new Grand Lamas must be by a lottery conducted in the presence of the Chinese Amban, and sent a golden urn to Lhasa for the purpose. If the lottery were for a Dalai Lama, the Panchen must officiate and vice versa, whichever one was temporarily absent from the world would have his transmigration supervised by the other.

This state of relations between Peking and Lhasa remained without major alteration until the turn of the present century, when the British invaded Tibet.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GLORY OF LHASA

Lhasa is generous—Medieval tapestry comes to life—Swiss watches and prayer-wheels—Brocade and motor-cycles—The Dalai Lama's palace—Tombs of solid gold—The House of the Master—Brain-eating goddess reborn as Queen Victoria—Holy Mice—A meal with the Cabinet

THAT first sight of Lhasa, goal of so many footsore travellers, is the most vividly remembered and most moving of all the gorgeous sights of Tibet. And the Potala, austerely magnificent, rising almost 100 feet higher than the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral, challenges the surrounding mountains and dominates everything. Below the twin pyramids of the Potala and the Iron Hill which adjoins it the city itself is almost invisible to the distant eye, with only an occasional glint of golden light through trees.

Lhasa lies in a flat, mountain-locked plain at 12,800 feet above sea-level from which the mountains rise another 6,000 feet, thrusting spurs into the plain between which lie little valleys and half-hidden monasteries. Following ancient footways, the road wanders past wooded parks and finally over the new steel bridge across the Kyi River into the city itself.

However much the stranger may expect or hope of Lhasa, it greets him with more. If there were nothing but the Potala, Lhasa would not disappoint. But here too are the world's biggest monastery, the Depung; the gold-topped Jo Kang Temple, 1,300 years old; the monastic School of Medicine on the tip of the Iron Hill; scores of monasteries, temples and shrines that make the city a lodestone for pilgrims from afar, who often spend their lives and all their possessions to reach it. All these, with the people in the market-place, monks, officials, nomads and peasants in a bustle of buying, selling, praying, begging and prostrating, bring to noisy, odorous, dusty, sunlit life the faded tapestries of European medievalism. This tapestry of seventh-century life now includes twentieth-century lorries unloading tea to be carried on waiting yaks and camels into remote valleys.

Lhasa has three sacred circles: the Inmost Circle that passes round the holiest image of Buddha inside the Jo Kang Temple; the Parkor which passes round outside the temple and is also the city's main shopping

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centre; and the Lingkor, a five-mile-long path which passes entirely round the city. Walking round these holy circuits in a clockwise direction brings merit, and they are always full of pilgrims stepping out smartly with spinning prayer-wheels or even "prostrating" all the way round the Lingkor; and lined with beggars, it being especially meritorious to relieve the poor while on these holy circuits. Prostrating pilgrims usually carry wooden palm-protectors strapped on their hands. They stretch themselves at full length, make a mark as far as their outstretched hands reach, stand up, advance their feet to the mark, then stretch out full length on the ground again. It takes upwards of 5,000 prostrations to complete the Lingkor, and some people do it many times, adding up a colossal amount of merit for their next transmigration. Anyone lucky enough to die on the Lingkor—even a pagan like myself—would have to pay no penalty for any of his sins.

In the main streets every house is a shop, tiny and without windows on the ground floor so that it is necessary to enter the door to find out what is on sale in the dark interior. Apart from Chinese goods, almost anything that a yak could carry was on sale or could be ordered in the Lhasa market. This was before the new road reached the Indian border and yaks and camels were still toiling into Lhasa every day with light luxury goods sewn up in the skins of their departed brothers. Raleigh bicycles lean against the wall of a Nepalese shop next to the dried carcases of sheep; Swiss watches, dried milk, cameras and French perfume jostle prayer wheels, offertory cups and rosaries. Dozens of Lhasa hat-shops stock western style felt trilby hats and Tibetan hats of gold brocade and fur. Trilby hats have caught on, but no other western style of dress. Tins of Australian butter are on sale in a city where tons of yak butter are burned daily to the gods. There are silks and cottons from Shanghai and India, flash-lamps from Hong Kong. Lhasans like to stand around out of doors, talking and laughing. Women stall-keepers bargain and flirt, wearing long, dusty robes and greasy striped aprons. Many of them wear a white conch shell as a bracelet, over which a rosary is twined.

Through doorways craftsmen can be seen hammering, stitching and bargaining. A towsle-headed nomad lolls against a wall with half a hundredweight of vari-coloured butter stitched into a yak-skin and cuts it off with his dagger by ounces to sell to housewives.

Boatmen carrying on their backs the huge, light craft of yak-skin that can float a ton have to turn sideways and inch their way past a convoy of tea-lorries unloading at the new State Wholesale Company's

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warehouse. Monks are everywhere, of every sect and social standing. Religion pervades every corner. Merchants count their beads and murmur "*Om mani padme hum!*" as they cheerfully cheat a buyer; for a Lamaist merchant assures himself that if he can succeed in cheating another, this proves the amount was due to him from a previous existence.

Lhasa was built in the days before sanitation, and in this matter there has been little change. Men, women, monks and nuns squat in the street without self-consciousness. Open heaps of rubbish—which are traditionally cleared once a year—lie along some streets, a mixture of rotting substances from which the purple-green carcase of a decomposing dog juts out. Dogs are everywhere, wild, ownerless dogs, that sleep all day in every patch of sunlight. Religious scruples prevent their disposal, and all night long they bark and howl, with every now and again a dreadful, long, blood-chilling scream as a dog is murdered by its fellows. These dogs also band together and attack people so that it is quite dangerous to go on foot after dark. So far the only proposition put forward to deal with the problem has been to round them up and separate them into two compounds, male and female, without food. It is then assumed they would eat one another and eventually all die out, and no Lamaist would have committed the sin of taking life.

Lhasa people, like all Tibetans, love flowers. Their first-floor windows are full of asters, stocks, marigolds and other common flowers which thrive in Lhasa's hothouse atmosphere. There are no gardens, the inner courts being quagmires where people and animals also conduct sanitary operations.

What is new in Lhasa does not immediately strike the eye. There is the steel bridge over the Kyi River. Only lorries could have transported the sections to that point. Steel girders there were before. Indeed, there was one in my bedroom in Lhasa. It had been cut into three-foot sections and carried by yak, then bolted together to make a girder again. It was painted blue with flowers on the sections and gold paint on the boltheads. This was the former house of a member of the Tibetan "cabinet", who sold his house to the Tibetan Working Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Now it is a guest-house, one of the best houses in Tibet, having windows all of glass.

In this city where there had never been any wheeled vehicles traffic jams now occur when jeeps and yak caravans meet. A traffic jam in Lhasa was unexpected. And on my first morning's stroll round town, between the Lingkor and the Turquoise Roofed Bridge (Yuto Bridge), where beggars and pilgrims live in hovels and nests of

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variegated garbage, I saw a long queue—nobles, monks, peasants, nomads, women and children. They were slowly entering a big area of new whitewashed adobe buildings over which I read in Han characters: "People's Hospital." There were some Tibetan words which I suppose meant the same.

While I watched, a vision flashed by on a motor-cycle; an official in a scarlet robe and yellow hat like a shallow bowl. On the pillion behind him was another man, dressed in black and wearing a hat like a lampshade with a 4-inch flounce of red silk threads. One of the distinguishing marks of an official's rank is the number of servants following him. This official on the B.S.A. motor-cycle was of the fifth class and must always be accompanied by one retainer. I wondered what would happen when higher officials, who must be preceded by two retainers and followed by two more and also have a messenger with document bag and whip, start to use motor cars, as they now want to do, and the Dalai Lama already does. Something has to change.

Rank is also carefully distinguished among lay officials by dress and hair style. Some of these styles originated as far back as 1,300 years ago, as, for example, the rule that officials wear their hair long and done up in two plaits which are intertwined—most appropriately—with red tape and dressed into two top-knots. An official who wears only these two top-knots is in the lowest rank. But if he wears also a golden ornament called a *gao*[1] between the knots he is no longer a cadet official, but an acting official above the fourth rank. Lay officials above fourth rank wear a yellow satin robe and a gilt helmet with a fringe of red silk. Officials of fourth rank and below wear a blue robe covered by an outer garment of red wool, and officials lower than a cabinet minister wear the yellow woollen hat that fits over the top-knots and looks like a yellow saucer balancing at an impossible angle on the head. Monk officials all dress alike—though the quality of the cloth they use varies according to their wealth—and they can only be distinguished by the number of retainers accompanying them. In Lhasa there are 100 or so officials above the fourth rank and about 400 above sixth rank, and they contribute much to the colour of the city with their bright clothes and gorgeous equipages. All Lhasans love jewellery, and especially the turquoise, which is an especially lucky stone. Coral runs it close for price and religious significance.

Electricity there is in Lhasa, supplied for four hours a day to a few

[1] A *gao* is any sort of portable container of holy relics. They take many forms and contain all sorts of different objects, according to their purpose.

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yellowish bulbs by a creaking 100-kilowatt water-driven generator that was repaired by the P.L.A. This ancient British-made machine that got here on yak-back will have to do until the new power station now being surveyed is built. Water has to be carried on backs, in wooden kegs and mainly by women. Houses are not heated and the only way to be warm is to put more clothes on. Yak-dung at 3*s.* for 10 lb. is too dear for anything but cooking.

What Lhasa lacks in the way of amenities and labour-saving devices, so do many places in the world. But what Lhasa possesses cannot be duplicated anywhere else at all. It is not for nothing that this city and its Potala[1] Palace have become a magnet for people all over the world.

From any point of the city or the plain or the mountains above, the palace of the Dalai Lama dominates the scene and draws the eye inescapably. Chagpo Ri, the Iron Hill, which rises to the south-west of the Potala, is higher, but quite fails to compete with the palace. Still, it is from the roof of the Medical College on the Iron Hill, with the golden roofs of the Potala lying below, that the dream city can be really appreciated; and that only while you actually watch it. No imagined or remembered vision can do justice to the beauty of buildings, copses, rivers, meadows, sandy roads, plains and mountains. No description can paint the unearthly brilliance and transparency of colour in that rare air and blue sky.

The eye travels over the town of flat-roofed houses and trees, the gleams of gold from the roofs of its temples, but always it must come back to the Potala, dynamic in its angular mass and the audacity of its conception. The mountains behind it—and they are very high ones—act only as a foil. The Potala follows the general style of Tibetan building: walls sloping inward from the foot and doors and windows following, with frames and lintels smaller at the top than at the bottom. Inspired simplicity and graceful pyramidal lines have created of it an illusion that here is a building carved from the living rock; daringly rejecting formal symmetry and following the asymmetry of the hill's contours to produce a living and harmonious masterpiece. Perhaps the Potala owes as much to its setting as this sublime landscape owes to the granite marvel that has been erected in its midst. Together they are perfect. Small wonder that the humble Lamaist pilgrim finds this vision enough to satisfy his soul and convince him that only gods could have built it.

[1] The Potala Hill is named after a hill on Cape Comorin, South India. There is yet a third Potala—a hill on the China coast.

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Lama merchants

Tibetan girls in Shuakingze

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The author with Djen Lojen, high official of Dalai Lama

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To reach the golden roofs which cover the tombs of "former bodies", departed Dalai Lamas, there is a climb of 440 feet up stone ramps and perpendicular ladders slippery with centuries of butter fumes and splashes from dripping butter lamps. In the Potala's forecourt, which would rate as a town in Tibet, live the laity who serve the palace; children shout and play, dogs sleep, people cook and quarrel. A day-long procession of stooping women and poor monk-servants haul themselves up the steep ladders with water-kegs on their backs, mostly to fill the thousands of gleaming offertory bowls and make tea for the monks. Little enough washing is done in Tibet by people of any class.

Fundamentally the Potala is the home of the current incarnate divinity's body and the tombs of the former bodies. There is a rule—poorly kept, I noticed—that no woman may be in the palace after noon. Monks alone live there, tending the thousands of butter lamps, some of which are great slabs of butter weighing ½ cwt. with several wicks burning at the same time, each in the little pool of butter melted by its tiny flame.

Electric torches are forbidden and I was lighted in my passage round by a grimy monk-servant using a butter-fed brass handlamp like those used by the wise virgins. In dim chapels and airless tombs, monks beat drums and chant a perpetual background of religious noise—serving the dead among the dusty gold and jewels and imprisoned darkness of 1,000 rooms.

It is a stiff climb to the tombs of the Dalai Lamas, and the greasy ladders have springy handrails only part-way down, equally greasy and apparently designed to deceive the climber and hurl him downwards. On the way up the main doors are guarded by tall, hanging cylinders of tiger skin, symbol of justice and power. Weeks could be spent examining the wealth in the Potala's 1,000 rooms. Especially notable for its integrity is a small chapel resting on the original rocky peak of the hill and now deep in the bowels of the building. This contains the lifesize effigies of King Songtsan Gambo and his two princess wives from China and Nepal, together with a cooking pot they are said to have used when they all lived together on this exact spot 1,000 years before the Potala was built.

At about the same level is the office of the Dalai Lama's secretariat, called the Yik Tsang, a most colourful title meaning "nest of letters". The reason is that the Tibetans file documents by stitching them into rolls of cloth and hanging them around on any available projection in

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the carving of pillars and furniture, so that an office looks like a lucky tree at a fair. Nearby in almost impenetrable dimness sits an effigy of the "Great Fifth" which I was told had once spoken words.

Directly under the golden roofs are the tombs of the Former Bodies, excepting that of the Sixth, the pleasure-loving Dalai Lama, who wrote some of Tibet's best beloved poetry. The tomb of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, predecessor of the present one, needs three stories of the Potala to contain it. I estimated its height at 70 feet, an enormous *chorten*[1] entirely covered with sheet gold. This is not gold-plated on to some other metal, but solid fine gold as thick as stout corrugated iron and said to weigh at least 1 ton. Since its foundation is reliably said to be of silver and it contains, apart from the salted Thirteenth Body, large numbers of costly presents given to him during his life, terrific wealth is represented by this tomb and the similar ones of earlier Bodies. This is not to mention the private treasury of the hierarchy, which contains the accumulated fortunes of centuries and must form a unique museum of priceless jewels, gold, silver and porcelain.

The golden roofs above, however, are of gold laid on bronze and not solid sheet, as are the tombs below. Around these golden cupolas the Dalai Lama takes his exercise when he is in residence during the winter. If I had to select one view with which to spend my life, and this is more or less the fate of the Dalai Lama, I think it would be this one with the city and plain of Lhasa below: the Turquoise-Roofed Bridge, Jo Kang and Ramoche Temples, great prayer poles, barley fields and the new ribbon of road running east to Peking and west to India. This highway—when it was still only a track that needed a good horseman to travel its whole length—was still one of the great transport lanes of the world, starting in Siberia, crossing Mongolia and Chinghai and going on through Lhasa and down to India.

I was not, nor is any pagan, allowed to enter the living-rooms of the Dalai Lama. But, like other rooms in the Potala, there is no fire to temper the arctic winds, no bathrooms, no electric light. When the sun goes down the call of guard monks is the only sound heard through the darkened palace and only the flickering light of butter lamps is available for study of the sum of all human knowledge, set down so long ago. There are few working people outside Tibet who would be willing to exchange their own for this life of circumscribed wealth and form, celibacy and abstinence.

[1] Domed monuments resting on a square base used to enshrine the bodies of high monks and holy men.

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Although it is the Potala that impresses, the spiritual life of Lhasa, of Tibet, of Lamaism, centres around the Jo Kang Temple. As the glamorous Potala contains little that is especially revered by Lamaists, so the almost invisible Jo Kang contains the most holy and priceless treasures of the entire faith. Inside the temple runs the Inmost Circle and outside, the Parkor. Between them are the chapels of the temples and government offices intertwined as inextricably as the government and church itself. It can only be approached through a market street, part of the Parkor, which is packed with stalls selling almost everything that can be bought in Tibet. Nothing can be seen of the main building from street level except the entrance, before which the stones are polished like glass by the bodies of pilgrims who prostrate themselves all day. It is impossible to tell what the temple looks like because of the offices and government departments that cluster round it. Inside, the honeycomb of tiny chapels round the Inmost Circle appear to be caves within the thickness of the walls themselves, but this cannot be determined. In the chapel doorways hang steel curtains made of strong rings and straight links like many bridle-bits joined together and closed with great steel padlocks.

There is no ventilation and a monk-servant goes ahead into the already exhausted air blowing a great mass of pungent juniper and herbs into a biting smoke that brings tears to the eyes and makes it still more difficult to distinguish the altars and images by the yellow, smoky gleam of butter lamps. Every corridor is lined with butter lamps, slabs of butter each in its chalice, each wick feeding its dim dab of flame from a little pool of melted butter; every chapel is coated with oily smoke; the floors are slippery with it and the golden images themselves gleam dully through a film of butter. This temple burns 4,000 lb. of butter daily, and this is not exceptional. Nearby Ramoche Temple burns as much. It would be difficult to compute how much butter is burned each day in all the religious places of Lhasa, not to mention the rest of Tibet.

In the Jo Kang I found in its purest distillation the smell that is inseparable from Tibet, but which is especially characteristic of its temples and monasteries: a smell compounded of rancid butter, yak-dung smoke, incense, people and mustiness. I brought back from Tibet a length of homespun woollen cloth which retains this unforgettable odour and which as I now write takes me back to the plateau and into its dark corridors again.

Before the chapel where the Master sits—the Jo itself—is a perpetual

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guard of monks. This is the holiest place in Tibet, "The House of the Master", and still contains the image of the youthful Buddha brought as her dowry by the Chinese princess 1,300 years ago. It is said to have miraculously made itself out of gold, silver, copper, zinc and iron and is thickly encrusted with precious stones. This is the magnet that draws pilgrims painfully over countless mountains to Lhasa.

The dreaded female guardian of the Tibetan government is in a chapel upstairs. This is Tibet's second most famous image, Palden Lhamo, who rides a mule, eating human brains from a skull. It was believed by some Tibetans that Queen Victoria was one of the incarnations of this goddess and there was a saying that while Victoria lived Britain would not invade Tibet. In fact, three years after the death of the Queen a British force actually entered Lhasa. This chapel is overrun with pale brown mice, so tame that they can be stroked. They are said to be holy and when they die are dried and ground into powder for medicine. I was warned before going that if a mouse should drink from my cup of tea this was auspicious and should be welcomed. In fact, it did not occur; but on another occasion a fly fell into my tea and caused a great commotion until some chopsticks were found and it was lifted out, much to everyone's relief, and put in the sun to dry. A servant picked up the tea and handed it to me to drink.

This temple is full of legends and miracles, numbers of them directed against the anti-clerical King Langdamra, who tried to overthrow the rule of the monasteries.

On the day I visited the Jo Kang I had been invited to take supper with the Kashag, as the Dalai Lama's "cabinet" is called. It consists of four lay members and two monks, all having the title of Kalon. I entered the banqueting hall from the roof of the temple and sat down with five of the Kalons, one of the monks being absent on business connected with preparations for Tibetan autonomy.

Overlooking Lhasa Square, with its stalls and people selling odds and ends, its bronze bowls—eight feet across—for boiling tea during festivals, and crowds around the new-model Soviet station-wagon I had used from Chamdo, I had a meal straight from the *Arabian Nights*. High-class Tibetans mostly eat Chinese-style food, but I had specially asked to be served a full Tibetan meal both out of courtesy to my hosts and my own curiosity. We sat at a long table loaded with meats, sweets and gold and silver plate, while high officials in rich silk gowns changed plates and poured drinks as a special mark of the courtesy that is a never-failing characterisic of Tibetans. There were great dishes of

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yak-beef, steaming saddles of mutton, sheep's heads boiled, cooled and split open to display the brains and tongues, entrails containing chopped meats (a sort of Tibetan sausage), liver, dumplings, chopped raw meat, tongues, eggs, pickles, peppers, cakes of barley flour blended with butter, sugar and beer. Meats and still more meats in fairy-tale variety and quantity.

Surkhang Kalon, former owner of the house I was living in, sat next to me and explained the mode of Tibetan banqueting in English. By that time I had already eaten more than was entirely comfortable and the absence of any sort of alcohol I put down to the presence of the Kalon Lama. A waiting servant came forward when Surkhang Kalon beckoned, bearing a chalice of engraved silver and gold, full of barley beer.

"Our custom," he explained, "is first to eat a little, as we have just done. Then the meal is begun and we can start to drink. Then we go on eating and drinking for a long time." I looked at the fresh steaming dishes that were now arriving and groaned to myself. I was a guest, and to be a guest in hospitable Tibet is something to live up to. From all sides the tastiest morsels were being piled on my plate.

"First we must drink to the gods," Surkhang explained. "This is how we do it."

The servant bent down with the chalice. Its silver rim was filled with grain as an offering to the gods. The Kalon dipped the fourth finger tip of his left hand into the barley beer, flicked the tiny drop into the air and put his finger into his mouth. When everyone present had done this, glasses were filled with the beer. This beer, called *chang*, looks like much-diluted milk and has a tingling sharpness. The Kalon told me that it is made by boiling barley in a small quantity of water and either adding yeast or letting it ferment naturally. When the fermentation process is nearly ended, hot water is poured over it, and when it cools the *chang* is ready to drink. This is the most popular of Tibetan alcoholic drinks—virtually the only one, because the spirit distilled from *chang* is both raw and expensive. It is harder to get drunk on *chang* than even the mildest of English ale, but some brews are well-matured and strong. It was this sort that we now began to drink, toasting and eating, as the Kalon had warned, "for a very long time". My own survival of this marathon meal I attribute to the carminative effects of the *chang*.

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Chapter Nine

THE DOG THAT SINNED

Transmigration and retribution—Monks, the monopolists of religion—Living Buddhas—A monk in every family—Sources of monastic income—Monasteries as depositories of wealth—Monks who leave the cloth—Problem of the ex-Living Buddha

NOT only did the Tibetans anticipate Darwin with their legend of man's descent from apes; they also anticipated Pasteur with their belief that diseases of all kinds are caused by tiny malignant demons which live on stenches and fly around invisibly to attack humans. Tibetans believe that their world is peopled with innumerable mischievous spirits, malicious devils that bring mankind all its difficulties and sorrows and have to be placated at every step and in every situation.

Terror of these spirits and fear of what may happen in the endless cycle of transmigration are the twin driving forces for religious observance. Lamaists believe that each soul is reborn endlessly in a variety of different bodies unless, by many devout lives, it earns the right to Nirvana. That louse which Tsong Kaba saved from the nails of his religious rival may have been a former monk who was indifferent to some point of ritual, or an official who cheated. The unfortunate soul that is reborn in such lowly conditions as a retribution still fully retains the human capacity to think and suffer.

One day I saw in Lhasa a little group of people sadly watching a dog that lay writhing in its last agonies in the dusty road. It was almost bald, with pinkish, cracking skin, twitching and panting, watching the people who watched it and watching other dogs waiting for a chance to rend it. There was a sort of communion between the people and the dog. Here was no dog, but someone who in former life had paid too little attention to religion. Not one of those people would draw his sword or dagger and put an end to the suffering animal, much as they pitied it, for that would be an impermissible intervention in the divine will.

People are rich or poor, healthy or sick, master or serf, because of behaviour in previous lives and the activities of demons in the present

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one. Virtue, especially devoutness and giving to the monasteries, will be rewarded by rebirth on a higher plane.

It should not be imagined from this that the ordinary Tibetan is grim-faced and solemn. On the contrary, he takes his religion very cheerfully. It is his way to avoid the metaphysical evils that lurk in every tree and stone, to improve his lot in this life and the next. For this he must proceed through the monks.

An unbridgeable gap exists between the monks and the laity. Monks form a superior caste. They have the monopoly of Lamaism, they alone can intervene with the gods, they are on their way to Buddhahood, they are the rulers, and whatever the rank of a layman he is inferior. Even monks of the most servile standing must be respected because they are striving to become *geju*—the first stage of approach to Buddhahood—clerics who know five of the fifteen ways to approach Nirvana.

A Lamaist's final aim is to pass out of all earthly existence as a Buddha who, having attained freedom from the 84,000 human passions, may enter Nirvana. Living Buddhas—there are about 1,000 of them—are the Lamaist equivalent of Christ. They have earned the right to eternal ease, to escape from the perpetual cycle of rebirth among earthly cares and suffering and then, by what the Tibetans regard as the supreme act of self-sacrifice, they give up this longed-for opportunity and return to earth. And they make this sacrifice not once but for all time, an infinite cycle of reincarnation in order to help other souls find their way to the Nirvana they have themselves sacrificed. When a Living Buddha dies—or, rather, when the body that happens to be the vehicle for his soul at the time dies—his soul passes into the body of an infant and manifests its presence in various established ways. Such are the Living Buddhas, but the Dalai and Panchen Lamas are highest of all, being reincarnations of Tibet's guardian god.

I asked the highest intellectual of the Lamaist church, the Gaden Dzeba,[1] the Enthroned of Gaden Monastery, a master of metaphysical philosophy, what the ordinary believer in Lamaism was expected to do to escape earthly peril, retribution during transmigration and to move a step nearer Nirvana. He answered that an ordinary person must:

[1] Gaden Dzeba is the title given to the monk whose religious knowledge entitles him to sit in the seat of Tsong Kaba, founder of the Yellow Sect. This position is held for seven years, and during the New Year even the Dalai Lama has to bow to the Enthroned. Examinations for the seat are conducted by the Dalai and Panchen Lamas and the monk who is vacating the seat.

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Pray, at least briefly, as often as possible.
Trust all gods implicitly.
Respect religious books, not tear them, and base his actions on their teachings.
Believe in and respect monks as servants of religion.
Love and help his neighbours, especially the poor.
Help monks and contribute to the monasteries.
Not kill or hurt any living thing, even a fly.
Do evil to none.
Not resist evil with violence.
Not seek revenge.

"The greatest sins," he added, "are to kill one's father or mother, to kill a *geju* or any other monk, to sow discord between monasteries or to violate the laws of the gods."

From many enquiries, I judged that at least one quarter of all males are in the monasteries. If a family has three sons, almost certainly if there are four, one will go into a monastery, entering at an average age of eight years, but some as early as four. Monasteries are found everywhere and only a few are great colleges like the Lhasa "Big Three" with up to 10,000 monks. Mostly they are small local monasteries with a dozen or 100 members of whatever sect.[1] In all cases they have land and engage in trade. Their land is worked by serfs tied to the monastic land and managed by lay over-serfs or bailiffs. Apart from income from land and herds which go to provide for the monastery, its monks and butter lamps, the monks of higher rank get presents in money and kind for officiating at marriages, births, deaths, festivals and in sickness.

[1] The sects of the Lamaist faith in Tibet are:
Gelugba, the Yellow Sect founded by the reformer Tsong Kaba (1357-1410). They wear yellow hats; all others wear red ones.
Sagya, the Coloured Sect, of Basba, tutor to the Kublai Khan. This sect established the clerical-lay system of government.
Ngingmapa, the Red Sect, introduced, according to available records, into Tibet from India by Atisha and said to have the most complete Buddhist scriptures in the world.
Kargyupa, the White Sect, founded by Marba, who went to India to study.
White Bon. This is regarded as a sect of Lamaism but—
Black Bon, about which I discovered very little, appears to be a form of resistance to Lamaism on either religious or social grounds. It is hard to meet any of its followers, since until recently they were severely repressed even to the point of death.
I was told by Gaden Dzeba: "All religious sects are good. I cannot judge the others because I belong to the Yellow Sect. The Black Bon existed before Songtsan Gambo and we know little about them. Their rules are the opposite of ours and sometimes we have disputes with them."
Black Bon seems to be regarded by orthodox Lamaist sects in pretty much the same way as witchcraft was in Europe.

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There must be few Tibetans who cannot claim a monk among their near relatives and thus regard themselves as having an intimate and beneficial relation to the monasteries. It follows that relations between the monasteries and the laity are close and that the mass of Tibetans see the monasteries as their own, as the way for advancement in this life through a family member being a monk, and of hope in future lives. It is theoretically possible for the soul of a Buddha to enter the body of any child, however lowly, and so lead to the elevation of the whole family. Indeed, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are always reincarnated in humble homes whose families are thereby immediately ennobled and made rich.

Inside the monasteries, as out, wealth counts. It is in any case a proof of devoutness in previous existences. Well-to-do families have houses of their own inside the monasteries, passed down from generation to generation of monks. Wealthy monks have their own food prepared, do no manual work and are assured of advancement all along the line. Advancement in the monastic hierarchy requires enormous study to memorise the scriptures. Among the vast majority of monks—those from poor families—some are able to learn to read and write and to gain advancement, but most can only hope to spend their lives as servants, carrying water and doing the work of the monasteries and monks of high degree.

Nevertheless, the monasteries offer the only hope of improvement for the child of a peasant or herdsman. In any case, within his own rank a monk is superior to the laity, however low his degree in the monastery.

The monasteries are the repositories of the wealth of Tibet across the centuries. Into them have poured all the gold and precious things, all the artistic and material production of the Tibetans. The richest noble is a pauper compared with this vast mass of congealed wealth. Moreover, when he dies, he will try to ensure his future existence by bequeathing most of his own lifetime's accumulation to the monasteries. Much of the monasteries' wealth is in the form of a constantly growing hoard of valuables which cannot be used, but a great and growing part takes the form of land acquired by bequest, by gift or taken in place of debt. Rent from the biggest land-holdings in Tibet, trade, moneylending and gifts form the current income of the monasteries.

Out of this income the poor monks are fed, and not too badly fed in most cases. This is their only carnal satisfaction. They are forbidden

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marriage, drink and smoking. Snuff is not forbidden and is very common among monks who can afford it. However, it is recognised that this is still imbibing nicotine and it is sinful to take snuff unless it is mixed with at least an equal bulk of incense ash. One remarkable effect of this is that Tibetan snuff-takers sniff it in sizeable piles off the thumbnail and then immediately exhale the white ash from their mouths, looking exactly as though they were smoking. I wondered what it did to their lungs.

I tried to make an assessment of the real hold that Lamaism has on the masses of laymen, but this is very difficult. I was told that 95 per cent. of Tibetans believe in Lamaism. There are no statistics, but I never met a Tibetan who cast any doubt on religion. On the contrary, it is hard to find a house, however poor, without a shrine of some sort, or a person without a rosary. Many laymen pray for several hours a day. Some Lhasans make a tour of the five-mile sacred circle every day. The sacred formula, "*Om mani padme hum!*" is seen everywhere. I noticed a wall covered with this sign near the Jo Kang Temple, and in front of it was a woman telling her beads in intervals of selling meat, which is forbidden by Lamaism, but much indulged in. Most of the pilgrims were old people to whom transmigration was becoming an approaching reality.

I had the good fortune to meet several ex-monks and was able to enlarge the picture to some extent by talks with them.

Tseren, whom I met in the Chengtu Institute for National Minorities, was formerly a poor monk who ran away and picked up a living for a time as a peddler. There had been some dispute in which his father lost the right to work on their land-holding, but Tseren had been too young to understand what the dispute had been about. Then his father left his mother and went to Lhasa. (Tibet has no marriage registration or marriage law. Marriage is a matter of common recognition and there is little that a poor woman can do about a husband who leaves her. Marriage only has the force of law among the nobility.)

His mother was left with six sons, two daughters and no land. She succeeded in renting a piece of land, and Tseren, aged eight, and two younger brothers were given to the monastery. The three older boys could work and were kept at home.

"It's very easy to become a monk," Tseren told me. "Mother gave one *hata* [a ceremonial silk scarf], one copper coin and a teapot full of cream cheese." He spoke excellent Han and was wearing the full

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Tibetan robe of good-quality woollen cloth thrown off one shoulder as usual. From the breast pocket of his Shanghai-made shirt two fountain-pens stuck out. I don't know if he had long hair, for during our talk he never once removed his hat, a wide-brimmed Gurkha model, and Tibetans should never be asked to remove their hats.

"My master was a high monk official of noble family, and he had much land and cattle. Too many to count. I heard he had fifty villages and 10,000 families on his land."

I think Tseren was not entirely sure what his master did in the Depung Monastery—one of the Lhasa "Big Three". As far as I could judge, he was responsible for buying and selling supplies in the monastery, which is the biggest in the world. His master had two houses in Lhasa and one in the Depung Monastery, five miles away.

"I was one of about thirty servants working for him. We were called disciples and sometimes he did teach us. But mostly we just worked. By the time I was twenty-four I had learned half the alphabet. There were higher and lower servants among us, depending on how well we could read and write. I was in the lowest rank, and my jobs were carrying water, running messages and grinding *tsamba*, serving tea, washing floors and such things. We could rely on a whipping if we did anything wrong."

When after all these years he had learned half of Tibet's thirty-four-letter alphabet, his master went off on a long trading trip to Chinghai, and Tseren stayed at Lhasa in his master's house. While his master was there he had been able to get enough to eat, but now the supplies issued by the monastery were not enough. So he went and found his father in Lhasa and helped him in petty trade. He could still draw his supplies from the monastery as long as his name was on the list, because his duties were only to his master and not to the monastery.

"Of course," Tseren said, "I had to obey the regulations—no wine or women. I had to behave as a monk."

Then complications set in. Tseren's father married again. He was an old man already by Tibetan standards, but it is fairly common to see young women married to old men in Tibet. Many men are out of circulation in the monasteries. His father's new wife treated Tseren very badly and he had to leave. At the same time he had fallen in love with a girl called Lojo and was determined to get out of monastic life.

"I had to get away. I had no money to arrange it and it would be impossible to leave the monastery and stay in Lhasa. I would simply

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be brought back and given 200 lashes. So Lojo and I ran away to the Black River district (in the grasslands north of Lhasa). I bought and sold things, tobacco, sugar and snuff, to make a living."

At this point Tseren and Lojo met the P.L.A. They were having a tough time in the grasslands and they listened to the stories the P.L.A. soldiers told about the changes in China. He was finding it hard to survive in the grasslands and dared not go back to Lhasa to be denounced by his new mother-in-law, who was no older than his wife.

"What could I do?" he said. "I believed these new soldiers. They were full of fire, talking about how great China had become. I had to believe them. Lojo and I were young and could still learn. Tibet will need people with education and I could see a good life in the way the P.L.A. men talked. After we had talked it over, Lojo and I applied to come to the Chengtu Institute for education. We are learning the Tibetan and Han languages and mathematics." He brought Lojo to see me—a small tough girl with work-worn hands and now wearing clothes such as only the nobility of Lhasa can afford.

Tseren said, without a trace of shame, that it was supposed to be a disgrace for a monk to revert to civilian life. "My two brothers are still monks and have good teachers—not like mine. If your master is good and you can learn to read and write early and not have too much work to do, you have a chance to get on. But most poor monks never get anywhere. They work all their lives and get only the monastery food. They wear the cast-off clothes of the better-off monks."

Another young ex-monk I met was Tuden Wangdiu, who had entered a monastery rather late, after he had tasted the fleshpots or at any rate the joys of hunting and an outdoor life. He went in at the age of eleven and his family were well enough placed to pay 20 silver dollars a year for his keep in addition to what he could personally produce from two scraps of family land in the monastery. He also was able to live in the family's room in the monastery. It had about 100 monks and two Living Buddhas as abbots.

"One of these Living Buddhas was a doctor and a moneylender. He was very unpopular and had many people doing *ula* for him. Once he had my father flogged for failing to pay a debt," young Tuden said.

"But how could that be," I asked, "if the Living Buddha is the reincarnation of a Buddha, a good person?"

He considered this carefully and spoke slowly, cautiously: "People

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sometimes say that some Living Buddhas are not selected well. Sometimes the local noble family and high monks arrange where a Living Buddha is to be found for their own purpose. Of course," he added quickly, "those are the smaller Living Buddhas. People like that are wicked and do as they like."

Tuden was a monk-servant, but had some time for study because his family had social position and his living expenses did not devolve on the monastery. Every page of the scriptures had to be read aloud, and if it was recited badly, Tuden said, "we were beaten till the blood came. Also we were often hung up with our arms behind us, by the wrists." He demonstrated with his hands pulled behind his back.

A monk, Tuden told me, is allowed to sow seed but not to dig or plough, which must be done by lay tenants. "A poor monk cannot add to his land-holding or create a land-holding because he cannot plough waste-land and cannot afford to get other people to plough it." Tuden got little from his own bits of land after he had settled everything, but he could eat fairly well and sell some produce to buy meat, butter and tea.

The only reason Tuden could leave the monastery was that his family had some land and a building on it. His release was conditioned on giving up these properties and helping his own brother pay back a debt owed to the monastery. This was a big debt of forty yaks which had died on a journey while his brother was in charge of them.

"It's fairly hard to get away from a monastery unless you have some property," he explained. "My monastery was only a little one, but there were eight mounted guards to chase runaways. If a runaway got caught it was serious. He could reckon on a flogging that took the skin off him. It was too risky. But if one got away, others would try too. They made it difficult."

Tuden, who had already graduated at the Chengtu Institute, was continuing with studies of the Chinese Constitution and the Han and Tibetan languages.

The third former cleric I met was in Lhasa, of a totally different sort, wealthy, noble and a Living Buddha. He was the father of Joma Buje, the young woman I met in the Chengtu Institute who was studying to equip herself to work in a factory, as soon as Tibet has a factory. I was naturally interested to find out how a Living Buddha, who is supposed to have passed beyond worldly temptation for all time, should be married and have a family.

Living Buddha Dzaju, as he is still called, met me kindly and was

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happy to hear that I had talked with his daughter 1,500 miles away. He was wearing the dress of a high monk, with cropped hair. His eyes, in a deeply lined face, were bright and lively with humour.

He saw my glance at his monkish dress as I mentioned his daughter and came straight to the point. "Other people gave me the title of 'Living Buddha'. I did not choose it," he said. "In my own case I think there was some error. But, being a Living Buddha, I studied, because the quality of study is evidence that a person is a Living Buddha."

I said nothing and he went on: "I have no doubt about the incarnation of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, but in some other cases the reincarnation is not carefully done.

"In the case of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, there is a holy lake where the picture of the exact place in which the reincarnation will take place can be seen reflected in the water. After long prayers a voice comes and reveals the place of the new incarnation.

"In my own case, the monks prayed and said that there would be a Living Buddha in my family. This was too simple. I come from a noble family and it is very easy for noble families to have Living Buddhas."

He had worked as personal assistant to the late thirteenth Dalai Lama and carried out many tasks for him. At the age of fifty-four he fell in love and asked for permission to marry, which the Dalai Lama granted. Now he is nearly eighty and still very active. Once a Living Buddha and having achieved Nirvana, having dispensed forever with the temptations of the flesh, he can no longer revert to lay conditions, and so he continues to wear the robes appropriate to an Incarnate and to present a knotty theological problem. Meantime, he is compiling a new Tibetan dictionary and inventing new words in cases where none exists to suit modern needs.

For obvious reasons, it is not easy to meet ex-monks, though many exist. Socially they are frowned upon and usually go to a district where they are not known. It is easier for people with wealth and land to leave the monasteries. Poor people have to consider not only that they are committing an act that will bring heavy retribution in the next existence, they are also cutting themselves off from their families, who will be held responsible.

Most laymen I met said that monks would prefer to marry and leave the monasteries if they had any choice in the matter. But this seems to the average Tibetan so remote as to be impossible.

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CHAPTER TEN

LAW AND MARRIAGE

The alliance of monks and nobles—Lhasa's Big Three—Where lies the power?—Monastery and castle—Tibetan law—Medieval spivs—Death without execution—Dangers of complaint—Marriage, polyandry, polygyny and divorce—The bride must weep

ONE of the seeming contradictions of the Tibetan system is that whereas great care is taken to preserve the rule of the clerical-lay nobility, equal care is taken to ensure that on reincarnation the souls of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas re-enter the world in the bodies of lowly infants and not of noble ones. In fact, this is precisely the way to ensure that no single lay family shall seize the title and make it hereditary. It is the best way to ensure the continued dominance of the monasteries.

But there has to be a lay nobility. The prime rule of the Yellow Sect, on which its cohesion largely depends, is celibacy. This precludes the passing on of the major posts in the government and monasteries by heredity. With a lay nobility outside the monasteries—kept up to numerical strength by the elevation of the families of the Dalai Lamas and occasional rich merchants—there are always noble recruits available for the monasteries. This produces the peculiar alliance and interdependence of clerical and lay nobility, with the church holding decisive power. Having the only concentrations of able-bodied men in large numbers, the monasteries have never been challenged since the Yellow Sect became dominant.

As soon as a new Dalai Lama is discovered, his father is made a duke and all members of his family raised to the nobility. It is a fallacy, incidentally, that a new incarnation must have been born at the precise moment of the death of the previous Dalai Lama. Theoretically the Dalai Lama leaves his body when he chooses. He does not have to die. If he departs for the Honourable Field because he is angry at the sins of men, he may prefer to spend some time there before returning to earth.

There has to be a period of regency between the death of one Dalai Lama and the ordination of the next at the age of eighteen, after

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a week of fasting with only water to drink. This is the moment of danger for Dalai Lamas. Only the "Great Fifth", Seventh, Ninth and Thirteenth lived to a normal age.

Three monasteries known as the Lhasa "Big Three" dominate the Yellow Sect—the Rice Heap, Rose Fence and Joyous Monasteries (Depung, Sera and Gaden). So powerful are these monasteries that the Manchu Dynasty decreed the maximum number of monks to be admitted to them. These were: Depung, 7,700; Sera, 5,500; Gaden, 3,300. The present population of the "Big Three" is now estimated at about 20,000, or almost half the population of the city.

These monasteries have great prestige and power. Most of the monk officials come from them and they are also the highest institutions of learning. Living Buddhas and the Dalai Lamas study at them. The attitude taken by the high officials of these three monasteries has for long been politically decisive.

The system of government based on the union of monasteries and nobility is not complicated. Ü, the largest area of Tibet, which is under the Dalai Lama's group, consists of 109 *dzong* or counties. It is the government of this area which is referred to as the Tibetan Local Government. With minor modifications it continues the system established under the Manchu Dynasty.

Under the Dalai Lama as head of the government are two governing bodies, one clerical and the other a mixture of lay and clerical. This latter, the Kashag, formerly consisted of four Kalons, one of whom was a monk, but now has six members, four of them lay and two monks. This "cabinet" has under it the offices for taxation, land, debt, grain, construction, finance and auditing. Outwardly this is the supreme administrative organ.

The other body directly under the Dalai Lama is the Yik Tsang (Nest of Letters) or Secretariat. This represents clerical power and has no laymen on it. All appointments of monks to any post must go through the Secretariat. This is vital, for a monk and a lay noble are appointed to every major position: the monk being the chief and the layman his deputy. Moreover, the Secretariat holds the Dalai Lama's seal, which must be affixed to all documents of importance. This appears to confer ultimate power on this clerical body, subject to the will of the Dalai Lama. He is the highest official and leader of the Kashag and the Secretariat. He has unlimited power if he has also the ability and courage to use it.

Most monk officials are sprigs of the nobility who enter the cloth

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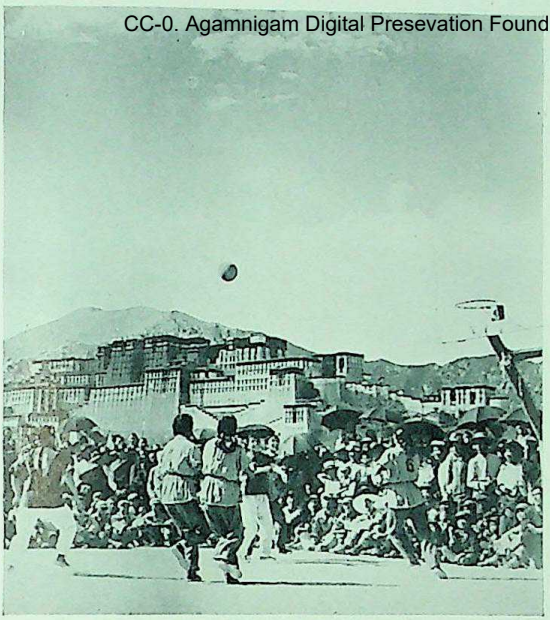
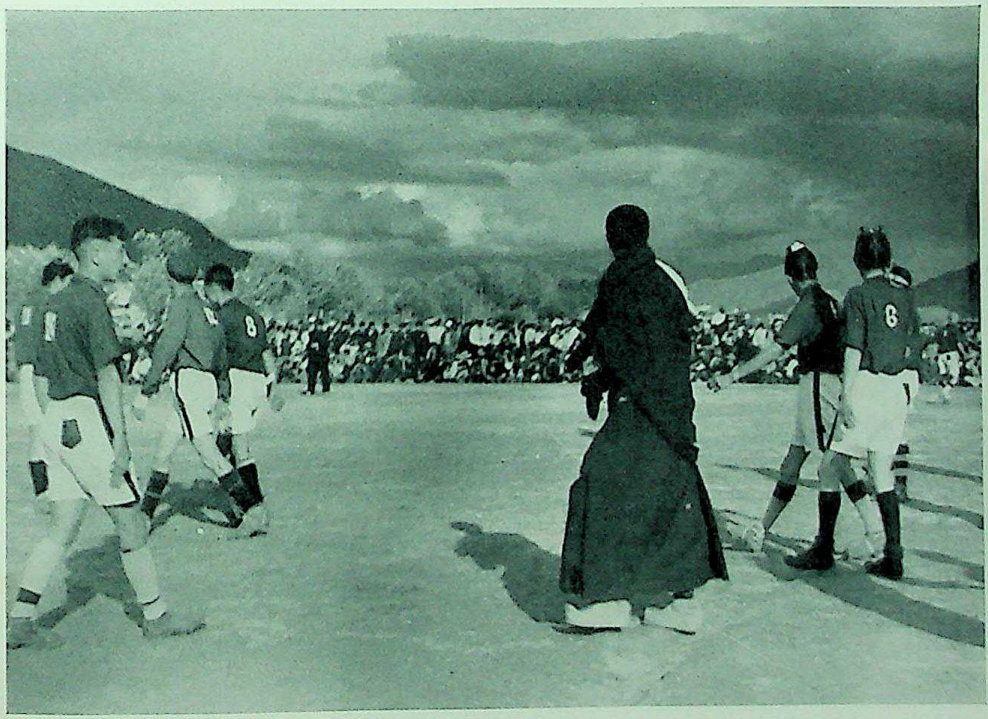


Basket-ball match

Lama referees football match



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Lhasa nobles picnic on the Iron Hill

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and have special training to fit them for official duties. A few—very few—monk officials are from common stock who have risen through sheer ability. Apart from these, commoners are debarred from holding all except the lowest offices. Army officers of regimental rank upwards must also be nobles.

Actually there is not much centralised government in Tibet. Commoners are governed by their overlords—monastery, government or noble—and these are the only land- and herd-owners. Just as there is the marriage of cleric and lay at the top, so the characteristic of Tibet at the lower level is the monastery and the *dzong* or castle. In most cases the *dzong* is built on a rocky hill in a fertile plain and the monastery nestles at its foot. Such castles are the homes of the *dzongpons* —usually a monk and layman—who administer the government's land in an area about the equivalent of a county and act the part of local magistrates and tax-collectors. They have no jurisdiction over the monasteries or nobility. Official salaries are negligible, but the opportunities to turn such positions to profitable account are many.

More than any other buildings the big stone fortresses of the *dzongpons* display Tibetan architecture at its best, with inward-sloping lines, square battlements and a disdain for formal symmetry that admirably blends Tibetan buildings with the surrounding mountains. The Potala itself is modelled after the much older and almost as magnificent castle near the seat of the Panchen Lama. Originally these buildings had the same function as the European castles: a place where people and animals of the whole community could take refuge and withstand a siege.

Tibet never found much for central government to do. There was not one yard of highway to maintain, no hospitals or other social services. Officials found their own salaries in the course of their work. The law was a matter of custom and cheap to administer. Commoners were punished by their master—monastery, noble or official—and cases that came under no such heading were dealt with by the *dzongpon*. Monk commoners who committed some small offence would get a flogging in the monastery. If the crime were more serious they would be unfrocked and sent to the lay magistrate. Higher monks were answerable only to the Secretariat and nobles only to the Kashag.

Lhasa's combined courtroom, dungeons and mayor's office is one of the buildings that leans against the temple. On the day I called to meet Gorkar Mebon—the city's chief magistrate and mayor—there were propitiating marks in the dust below the entrance steps, including

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a swastika. This was to assist my safe arrival, the Mebon told me as he met me in his red coat, blue gown and yellow saucer hat of a fifth-rank lay official. We went into the courtroom to talk, the Mebon sitting cross-legged on a divan and myself at a table of white enamel—actually a table designed for an operating theatre and brought to Lhasa on a yak. The walls of the court were papered with memoranda, court decisions, faded letters and documents bearing seals. About twenty cloth bundles of documents hanging around the pillars constituted the court filing system. There were big iron padlocks and chains. Across from me the clerk of the court sat cross-legged at a lower level, taking great pinches of snuff from time to time.

Gorkar Mebon said there was little enough crime in Lhasa and most crimes were simple. He then went on to tell a most complicated story about a restaurant keeper who had borrowed money to buy liquor and failed to pay his debt. People moved into and out of the story like an early film: a man from Amdo who wanted to make the debtor bankrupt and a Nepalese trader who had advanced some money earlier. Finally, the main creditor came one night and seized the furnishings. He claimed that the owner had said he could take them and the owner denied it. With my head in a whirl, I asked what had been the court's decision. The Mebon favoured me with a wide-eyed smile of wisdom.

"I ruled," he said, "that the owner's loss from not having the furnishings for two weeks was a big one, but on the other hand the creditor had not got his money. I said that the furnishings must be returned and the restaurant-keeper should pay 200 silver dollars less than he had borrowed." This seemed very reasonable to me and I asked what had been the outcome. The furnishings had been returned, but the restaurant keeper had still failed to pay the debt. And there the matter rested.

His next examples reminded me of the fact that my great-grandfather had seen a man hanged for stealing a sheep. There had been some youths in Lhasa pilfering and cutting pockets—medieval spivs. Twenty lads were rounded up and brought before the Mepon. After confessions had been obtained, they were first given 200 lashes each and then sent to various areas to work on government-owned land supervised by over-serfs. In some cases they were taken over by landowners. Sentences were for life.

He described a case of accidental manslaughter. A stallholder left his stall in the care of a companion while he went away for a few

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minutes. While he was gone, his friend picked up a rifle that was on sale, jokingly pointed it at another friend and pulled the trigger. It went off and killed the friend. It was clearly accidental and this was borne out by the widow of the dead man. Judgement: The killer was careless in having failed to check whether the gun was loaded. Exile for life, 100 lashes and to pay an indemnity of 25 silver dollars to the widow. Since the stallholder had failed to inform his friend that the gun was loaded, he was also guilty. He got eighty lashes without exile.

No death sentences have been imposed in Tibet for some years, according to the Mebon. Killing is against Lamaist ideas, and this fact always confined the death penalty to a few heinous crimes, such as killing a monk. Even where the death sentence was administered, the Mebon said, it was in a form that made no person responsible for the death: by hurling the person from a precipice or sewing him in yak-skin and throwing him in a river. Lighter sentences were of amputation of a hand, both hands, a leg or both legs, the stumps being sterilised with boiling butter. "But such things have not been done in my memory," the Mebon insisted. "It depends on the situation. That heavy whip, for example: if a person had 300 strokes of it properly applied he would almost certainly die afterwards."

Commonest punishments are the whip, the *cangue* (a portable pillory) and exile. There are two sorts of *cangue*, a small wooden collar about 18 inches in diameter with a hole for the neck. This is fixed permanently on life-exiles. The other, a heavy wooden *cangue* 3 feet square, is worn for a week or two and the convicted person is allowed to go about the streets. His crimes are written on this board and he has to be fed by others. When it is taken off he is whipped and exiled. An exile is not punished if he manages to return, unless he repeats his crime.

A plaintiff has to be careful, because if he reports that another person has committed a crime and that person is found innocent by the court, the plaintiff has to pay an indemnity and, if the court considers the information to be maliciously false, he would receive the sentence appropriate to the guilty person as well as paying an indemnity.

Detection of crime must be done by the plaintiff. If a robbery is committed, it is up to the person robbed to find the culprit and his stolen goods. Then he can report it to the court and hope that the court will not pronounce the robber innocent.

A set of rules—"Ten Evils to be Uprooted"—compiled by Songtsan Gambo are still claimed to be the essence of Tibetan law. These

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evils are murder, theft, adultery, falsehood, sowing discord, cursing, gossiping, evil thoughts, conspiracy against others, covetousness. There are law books, but, as one Tibetan noble remarked to me: "Some *dzongpons* have never seen a law book. What counts with them is who can pay most."

I wondered how the law stood about multiple marriages, or even monogamous marriages, but neither the Mepon nor anyone else could give me a clear answer. In the end I had to assume that there is no effective marriage law in Tibet, but there is the force of custom and among the nobility this more or less has the force of law. Custom varies sharply from class to class and area to area.

All over Tibet you find polyandry, in the form of one woman being the wife of several brothers, and polygyny: one man being the husband of several sisters. In both cases the aim is to prevent the dispersal of family property, but polygyny is found almost exclusively among the rich. It has nothing in common with the polygamous marriages of Moslems, or with what used to exist in China. A wealthy family with several daughters and no sons might bring one man into the household to be the husband of all the daughters.

On the contrary, polyandry is common, especially among the herdsmen. Whatever its origin, it now has a compelling economic motive. If the herds and grazing rights were subdivided there would not be enough for several sons each to support a wife. A wife is therefore found for the eldest son, and his younger brothers share the wife so long as they remain living together. If they too find means to leave the family circle and marry separately they lose all rights in the wife and any children that may have resulted. Children are all regarded as those of the eldest son. In all cases that I investigated the arrangement seemed to work amicably. The eldest son has prior rights. He is the master. Generally one son, the youngest, would be a monk, one out with the herds, one hunting; someone has to go to fairs and so on. There would be few occasions on which they were at home together for long periods. Since the property remains in the family, the question of which children are of which father has no economic significance.

Commoners must get permission to marry if they are not under the same overlord. Such marriages involve the loss of one person on the estate and the potential loss of the children of the marriage. This is important because Tibet has almost everything but manpower. A sum of money has to be paid by the bridegroom's noble or he must send an equivalent manpower replacement. Sometimes this is refused

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and the marriage cannot take place. Marriages among commoners represent a simplified form of the complex marriage arrangements of the nobility.

If the parents of an aristocratic girl think they have found a suitable husband for her, they first consult the monks as to whether it is auspicious, and if there are no divine obstructions negotiations are conducted with the man's parents. If everything is settled financially, the bridegroom's parents send presents to those of the bride. These include the "milk fee", a present specifically for the girl's mother, who suckled her. If these presents are accepted, the marriage is regarded as settled.

On the wedding day, the bridegroom's friends, but not himself, go to collect her at dawn. She must ride a mare that has already foaled (this is not part of the commoners' ceremony, because only noble women are permitted to ride horses). The bride is wrapped to the eyes to avoid evil influences, and when she arrives at the groom's home she must weep in order not to show disrespect for the parents she is leaving.

On arrival at the groom's house, the "gifts" of the groom's family —tea, money, butter, *tsamba* and cloth—are piled up as a platform on which she dismounts. She will not dismount unless the servants accompanying her think the gifts adequate. Otherwise the groom's family adds more. The amount has generally been agreed in advance, but there is sometimes chiselling. The girl's parents do not attend the marriage.

When the bride enters the first landing in the house, the groom's mother presents her with a keg of milk and butter, which is regarded as very auspicious. She remains veiled and only the husband and close friends can see her face. On an auspicious day, a few days later, the bride sits in the hall and the groom selects an older friend, who puts a turquoise ornament, a family heirloom, on her head. This symbolises that from that moment there can be no going back on the marriage. There are parties lasting a week, still without the girl's family. After some months the groom's parents can visit the bride's parents and big receptions are held.

Most marriages in Lhasa are now simpler than this full form, but it is still in use elsewhere. Some young nobles now arrange their own marriages, but even if they have done so they dare not tell their parents themselves, but get friends and relatives to break the news and convince the parents. Polyandrous and polygynous marriages are also under the same system, because the marriage is actually only to the eldest son or

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daughter. Tibetan women regard polyandrous marriage as an institution conferring great prestige on women.

Registers of the marriages of nobles are kept by the Lhasa government, but there is no registration for commoners.

Divorce is easy. If both sides want the divorce it is only a matter of arranging how the property will be divided. A woman can institute divorce and, if the man agrees, there is a sharing of the property. She gets no property if he disagrees. Children of divorced couples are shared, the man taking the boys and the woman the girls. All this is by tradition. There is no law. Only when the families of aristocratic couples cannot agree on divorce arrangements are the authorities called in to arbitrate. They are not required either to solemnise or dissolve marriages.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

PLAYTIME ON THE PLATEAU

Kite warfare—A week-long picnic—How to butter tea—Lhasa dance-hall—Bagpipes—The old shako—Musical arrows—Yak-dung and paraffin—His Holiness and football

THE few weeks before and after October 1 were one long round of fun and games in Lhasa, partly because the day of the founding of the Chinese Republic coincides with the traditional picnic period in the Tibetan capital. Lhasans are tireless picnickers, and one of the high spots of the year is the big official *linka* or picnic at the end of September. Apart from this, private picnics are always going on by the side of the Kyi River and in the little parks that are a charming feature of the Lhasa landscape. Under white tents, partly open and covered with *appliqué* in blue and red, whole families or several families spend days and weeks playing, swimming, dancing and singing.

A common game among Tibetan girls at these affairs is foretelling marriage. The girls sit in a circle and each puts some personal object in the middle under a cloth. Then everyone has to sing a song in turn. After each song the keeper of the kitty takes out an object at random and the song is taken as being directed at its owner. One song meaning that some girls should stay unmarried to play together, and should not be impatient, goes:

You have gold and silver rings.
Save some for yourself.
Don't give them all to others.

Another favourite is:

Don't worry, girl in the clouds,
When the clouds break
You will find your lover.

It was kite season most of the time I was in Lhasa. Little boys are very skilful at flying small square kites without tails, with the aim of cutting the strings of other kites with their own. To this end the strings are treated with glue and powdered stone. Terrific duels are fought,

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during one of which I saw a small monk engaged with another urchin, far too engrossed to notice his mother approaching to capture him and take him off squalling.

Schoolboy pranks in Tibet have other hazards than mere adult bad temper, according to Sodo, the young aristocrat I met in Chengtu. He had a bad scar on his face and I asked him how he came by it. It was due, he said, to stealing fruit. He had been warned that a fruit tree in the temple grounds had devils in it, but he went ahead and climbed it to steal fruit. Soon after this a big boil came on his face and he was told that the devils in the fruit tree had caused it. "The monk said so, and my mother said of course the monk would know if there were devils in the tree," he explained.

Lhasa had three days' holiday for October 1 which occurred during the solid week of eating, drinking, entertainments, cards and mah-jongg of the official *linka*: the big annual get-together of monk and lay officials.

This protracted party took place under a vast blue-and-white awning and inside the nearby buildings of a park half a mile from the Potala. From about noon onwards each day, tables were set, carpeted settees laid out and the place was jammed with officials of every grade up to Kalons, Living Buddhas, and every sort of monk, playing cards with a zest that set some doubt in my mind that they were not gambling. Some groups made no pretence and had wads of notes on the low tables. Others obeyed the letter of the rule against gambling and played on credit. On the grass under the awning a long board had been laid on which a group of dancers performed to the music of a Tibetan band all day, largely ignored by the eating, drinking and chatting officials. There were no women among the guests.

It was here that I got to like buttered tea. Tea in Tibet is little enough like anything in China, India or Europe. It bears not the slightest resemblance to the London teashop article or to the brown fluid sold in cafés or to any other tea. The only way to get to like it is to forget that it is tea and then it becomes a thoroughly likeable something—perhaps soup. Tibetans like their tea done up in hard bricks with the twigs as well. A hunk is broken off and boiled for a long time. To this brew is added salt, soda and a large piece of rancid butter. Then the whole is churned in a wooden cylinder by means of a plunger with holes in it, and when it is thoroughly blended is fit to drink. Tibetans drink it in unbelievable quantities, up to sixty cups a day if they can afford it. It is extremely sustaining and leaves a rim of

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fat round the mouth that helps to stop the lips cracking. I longed for it whenever I felt really fatigued in the rare air. At the *linka*, oceans of it went down alongside gallons of Chinese spirits, Scotch whisky and French cognac, all very popular with the Tibetan wealthy and no doubt improved by the long yak trip. Monks, of course, debarred from drinking alcohol, drank toasts in orange squash, which they jocularly called "monk wine" and downed with a suspiciously deft wrist action.

Food at these affairs was mostly a mixture of Chinese and Tibetan style cooking, mostly protein and including the most expensive delicacies in Tibet—sea foods—prized because Tibet has no sea and also because they help to prevent goitre, which is very common.

In the evenings there was dancing into the small hours in the new all-purpose hall built by the Communist Party Working Committee. Here the younger generation of Tibetans and the young Hans working in and around Lhasa dance, or learn to dance, with the greatest zest, regardless of what their elders may think about it. At these dances the girls invite the men quite freely and it is not regarded as forward if a girl asks the same man any number of times. Mostly they dance well, but sometimes a complete novice will lead you on to the floor with determination, refusing to follow, impossible to lead, and generally causing a good deal of peering at each other's feet. Among the best dancers were the graceful and beautiful Tsarong girls, daughters of the former Kalon Tsarong, reputedly the richest man in Tibet. Some of these young nobles speak English, having been educated in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, and a good number are now learning the Han language. Most of the Han girl dancers were nurses, doctors or dentists from the Lhasa People's Hospitals, or members of the P.L.A. entertainment troupes who are now studying Tibetan folk songs and dances. Many of these Szechuan girls had come to Lhasa on horseback or on foot before the roads had been built, taking months on the journey. They had the gaiety and toughness of the genuine pioneer.

As October 1 drew near the five-starred flags of China began to appear out of more and more windows until every street was thick with them. Arches decorated with red cloth were built and, on the plain before the Potala, a big rostrum appeared behind which were a dozen embroidered tents.

Apart from skeleton staffs maintaining perpetual rituals in the monasteries and temples, and a few immobilised beggars on the Lingkor, the whole of Lhasa's population got into their best clothes

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for the big meeting below the Potala. Kalons were in full regalia: a gown from neck to ankles of crisp gold brocade, tied in with a red sash; a soft white silk shirt turned out at the neck and cuffs; through the left ear a 6-inch-long turquoise earring, its weight supported by a red cord over the top of the ear; a small turquoise button in the right ear; a hat turned out of light wood, gilded and varnished, its upper half covered with a fringe of red silk; a small purse and other odds and ends hanging on the back of the sash; boots, when visible below the gold brocade gown, heavily embroidered in stripes of red, blue and white. Other officials only slightly less splendid wore the colours and materials prescribed centuries ago for their ranks. A few officials wore the ancient style of long Mongolian gown with a short jacket of gold brocade and a cloth-of-gold helmet. Special permission of the Dalai or Panchen Lamas is needed to wear that dress.

Their horses were not much less splendid, with silk padded saddles and rugs of the best weave, bronze stirrups of delicate workmanship padded inside with cloth, tassels and more metalwork on the head and each horse held by a servant in a wide, flat hat with a deep fringe of red silk.

The women wore their traditional finery: long, sleeveless gowns of heavy silk over finer silk blouses. These blouses, like the men's shirts, have extremely long sleeves usually rolled to the wrist, but allowed to float almost 2 feet beyond the hands when dancing. A bright sash draws the long gown flat across the stomach and behind the hips into two deep pleats running down to the hem and up to the shoulder blades. Every woman wore her best apron, and at their best they are beautiful and extremely expensive. They consist of three narrow lengths of handwoven cloth sewn together so that the inch-wide stripes of blue, red, yellow and green do not meet exactly. In Lhasa the hair is parted in the middle and falls in two plaits tied together at waist level or lower. Their boots are like the men's—knee-high and embroidered.

There were pilgrims, herdsmen, hunters, peasants, units of the Tibetan army and P.L.A. Seen from a distance, with the bright clothes, fluttering silk flags, embroidered tents, horses, decorated rostrum and the red and white mass of the Potala rising in the background, it might have been the scene of a tournament in the days of chivalry but for the incongruous jeeps and lorries parked at the side.

Speeches were made—many speeches. One, by Ngabou Kalon, I heard with especial interest because he was the man who led the

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negotiations for unifying Tibet with China in 1951 and is now a leading figure in the preparations for Tibetan autonomy. The gold-clad Kalon advanced to the battery of microphones and pulled out the notes of his speech from the reefer of his robe. He recalled how the two previously hostile factions—the groups around the Dalai and Panchen Lamas—had been reconciled since Tibet "rejoined the motherland", as he put it. On the back wall of the rostrum behind him were portraits of Mao Tse-tung and the two Grand Lamas.

This reconciliation had brought with it the new roads and many new advances for the Tibetan people, he said. New mineral resources had been discovered, new methods of farming were being developed and plans worked out for factories, hydro-electric power and irrigation. "Such things have been made possible only because our country has an overall plan of economic advance to socialism."

A tall Han in blue uniform followed the Kalon: Fan Ming, speaking for the Communist Party Working Committee in Tibet. This committee and its sub-committees in Chamdo, Gyantse, Shigatse, Ari, Yatung and the Black River District are called "Working Committees" because they are not organised by local members—that is, Tibetans. Tibet has no working class and no Communist Party, nor indeed, any other political party as it would be understood in the western world. Fan Ming, speaking in the absence of Chang Ching-wu, who represents the Chinese Government in Lhasa, thanked the Tibetan people for the energy they had shown in helping to build the new roads.

I strolled round to look at the Tibetan army which will be gradually reorganised into the P.L.A. under the terms of the 1951 agreement. Apparently there is no hurry to do this. A strong and unmistakable imprint of British influence is the most striking feature of this tiny force. Indeed, they looked like a battalion of British World War I troops at first glance, with British uniforms of that period and equipped right down to the band in British style with bagpipes and leopard skins for the drummers. There was a strange look about the officers, who wore the usual long turquoise earrings under caps made very full to accommodate their hair rolls.

Going back even further, there were two soldiers in one of the grandstands looking just like an illustration from *With Kitchener to Khartoum*. They were wearing peakless black shakos, black breeches and puttees with scarlet jackets of British cut. They were Nepalese, remnants of a past period when Nepal received an annual indemnity of 10,000 rupees from Tibet and had the right to establish mixed courts

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to try Nepalese in Tibet. The indemnity has not been paid since 1953 and the mixed courts have also been abolished. But these Nepalese soldiers were two of seven or eight who still remain in their last-century British uniforms, augmenting their pay by trade, at which the Nepalese in Lhasa specialise. Nearby was the Indian acting Consul and the Nepalese representative in a cloth-of-gold suit. In front of the audience an ancient pilgrim sat listening with one ear cocked to the speeches while he never for one moment stopped storing up merit by twirling two big prayer wheels, one in each hand. Most of the audience stopped passing their rosaries through their fingers only long enough to clap and cheer.

But even more anachronistic than the jeeps was a giant Stalinetz combine harvester behind the meeting-place, outside the door of the Science Exhibition scheduled to open on the next day.

After the meeting I went behind the stand to the tents and was drinking my third or fourth noggin of buttered tea when I heard a repeated loud humming, starting on a high note and falling. An archery tournament was under way. Arrows fitted with a light, hollow wooden head are used, pierced to make them scream as they travel and also to cut down their range and reduce the danger of hurting anyone. Full-strength bows are used and the target is a disk about 40 yards away. Other contests included lifting big, smooth boulders and wrestling. Then came performances by P.L.A. entertainment groups and an acrobatic tumbling act by Peking opera performers, followed by Tibetan dancers and opera until it was time to go over to the *linka* for a supper party. Tibetan dances are very similar in many points to those of the North American Indians. The dancers wear a fan-shaped headdress like the eagle feathers of Indian braves, carry a staff when they dance and move in a ring one behind the other with a rhythmic stamp. This, together with the similarity of design in the pattern of hand-woven cloth, the graceful walk and stance, facial characteristics and, of course, the buffalo-like appearance of the yak, often made me think that tracking the connection between the Tibetans and American Indians might be a fruitful job for future ethnologists.

Three big events were fixed for October 2: the Science Exhibition, netball and football matches between Han and Tibetan teams. Sadu Rinchen, who often helped me with interpretation, was captaining the Lhasa football team, and one of my private puzzles was how a footballer with two topknots could head a ball.

When I got to the open space below the Potala, a queue already

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stretched right round it waiting to get into the Exhibition. About one-third of the queue consisted of monks. I think every able-bodied citizen of Lhasa went through the Exhibition at least once during the holidays.

The Exhibition showed with many simple diagrams and models how to protect herds and develop better cattle, grow better crops and prevent and cure sickness. The monks were fascinated by the microscopes. Little boy monks had to be physically dragged away from them and herdsmen gazed into them in awe and walked away with wide eyes and incredulous expressions. Here is no doubt a future knotty problem for Lamaism. The strict veto on taking life is either ignored or covered with sophistry when a single life provides food for many people, as when a large animal such as a sheep or yak is killed—and killed by someone other than the eater. But the microscope shows that no one can eat cheese without destroying countless living organisms at each mouthful.

A very proud little section of the exhibition was put in by Lhasa's new Primary School—drawings and models that might be duplicated in any elementary school in England, especially the model aircraft; which seem to point the way young Lhasa is thinking. One big section dealt with problems of maternal and child welfare, with life-size cut-away models showing the whole progress of a child from conception to birth, with explanations about hygiene. Mothers looked thoughtfully, girls giggled and monks discussed and pointed without any self-consciousness.

There were modern labour-saving devices which could only have been brought, like the combine harvester, along the new roads. Yaks could not get far with a refrigerator or washing machine. A herdsman stood studying a primus cooker. Having seen nomads in the sleety dawn of 14,000 feet, coaxing a yak-dung fire into smoky life with home-made yak-skin bellows, I could imagine what a difference oil stoves could mean to Tibetans.

Not even the netball and football could draw the queue away from the exhibition, but those who had already passed through went over to watch the matches. Lhasa Tibetan girls *versus* Han girls working in Lhasa was a slaughter of the Tibetan netball team. Ruthless team-work and pitiless scoring gave the Han girls a 43 to 4 victory over their opponents, who fought to the end, but had neither the stamina nor team-work necessary. But all these girls could run around for an hour in the blazing sun without suffering from mountain sickness, while I was still panting if I climbed a few steps.

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We moved to the football pitch, already lined with spectators. After a few skirmishes between them and monk police, they were finally pushed outside the side-lines and the two teams trotted on to the field, where they were solemnly introduced by the President of the Lhasa Patriotic Youth Association, a young monk of obvious wealth. Lhasa was playing the best P.L.A. team and Lhasa was reckoned tough, having played together for several years.

Both teams were dressed in shorts and team shirts, stockings and football boots, but the main difference lay in the headdress. On the Tibetan side half the team—lay nobles—had high top-knots, wrapped round with handkerchiefs. They had removed their gold ornaments. The other half had cropped heads and no problems about heading the ball. These were the monks. Actually heading was not prevented by the top-knots, which are slightly to the back of the skull and leave plenty of room for heading in the usual way.

Sadu Rinchen told me that football had been forbidden in Tibet until after 1951. As he put it: "His Holiness sent a delegation to Peking in 1951 and also lifted the ban on football." He appeared to regard these two actions as having equal merit.

Although, in my view, the Tibetan team was a shade better than the P.L.A., the match was a draw, the Lhasa team having failed to drive home several attacks and displayed some careless shooting.

There were more parties, more dances and more picnics, but for the Lhasans in general, certainly for the bulk of the people rather than the small official circle, the biggest hit of the holiday was undoubtedly the Science Exhibition, where the queue never got shorter and some families took along their *chang* and some food and made a day of it—going through once and then picnicking in the queue until they could go through again.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

BRITONS IN TIBET

Enter Britain—Spies with prayer-wheels—Preparations to invade—Free Trade: "You've got to have it!"—The Dalai Lama flees—And flees again—The monks march—"White Barbarians"—The finger-game

AMONG all the gold and jewels in the butter-reeking dimness of the Potala, the tombs of the "Great Fifth" and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama are the costliest and most revered. The "Great Fifth" brought the Yellow Sect to power in Tibet and built the Potala. The Thirteenth Body was the only Dalai Lama to exercise full secular power and did so for thirty years of manoeuvring between powerful rival monasteries and princelings, and finally through invasion and economic penetration by the British, the fall of the Manchu Dynasty and the rise of the Kuomintang. Talking of the Thirteenth Dalai, Tibetans commonly recall that he ordered Tibetan troops to oppose the entry of British forces and then created an embarrassment for them by fleeing Lhasa and staying away while they were in the city.

The remains of the Thirteenth Body now sit encased in a ton of gold not far from the assembly hall where the British forces under Colonel Younghusband forced the signing of a trade agreement in 1904 while their guns were trained on the Potala. This hall is exactly as it was then, its tall, square pillars, wrapped round with red cloth, supporting ornately carved and painted beams.

British interest in Tibet was first expressed in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the East India Company and Warren Hastings, first Governor-General of British India, turned their attention to the plateau hidden behind the most colossal mountains in the world. At that time the East India Company was engaged in the process that led later to the annexation of Bhutan—then a tributary of Tibet. In 1772 battles between British forces and the Bhutanese subjects of Tibet led to the Panchen Lama asking the British to stop the hostilities. Warren Hastings agreed on condition that the Panchen Lama would receive an envoy to discuss trade.

G. Bogle, the first Englishman to visit Tibet, went to Shigatse in 1774 with Hastings' trade proposals, which were referred to Peking and never heard of again. "What appeared to Warren Hastings . . . a

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simple and mutually advantageous proposal, the opening up of trade relations, would seem to have presented itself to the Lhasa Government and to the Manchu Resident and the Imperial Throne in the light of the lowering of the portcullis to an armed foe", wrote Louis King,[1] former British Consul in Kangting.

That was exactly how the Chinese Emperor and his Tibetan tributaries regarded the matter, as Hastings' next envoy, Captain S. Turner, found out. Turner quoted a letter from the Chinese Amban in Lhasa to the Panchen Lama stating the official view very clearly: ". . . the Feringhi [Europeans] were fond of war, and after insinuating themselves into a country raised disturbances and made themselves master of it; and as no Feringhis had ever been admitted into Tibet he advised the Tashilhumpo [Panchen] Lama to find some method of sending them back.[2]

But the reports brought back by the two British envoys had been enough to whet the appetites of the merchants. They told of masses of gold lying around in the rivers, of musk, borax, skins that could be bought cheaply and paid for with scissors, knives and glassware. Bogle reported having seen goods from Russia in the Panchen's palace—which was very likely, because caravans from Buryat Mongolia have been going yearly to Tibet since the dawn of history. Turner described the huge quantities of tea consumed by Tibetans and reported that the Chinese Emperor used tea and silk to control Tibet.

Temporary setbacks did not deter the British Government. Most of the next 100 years was taken up in bringing Sikkim (also a part of Tibet then), Bhutan, Nepal and China under British control. Darjeeling was ideal for growing tea and Sikkim the best route to Tibet. By 1861 the Sikkimese had been defeated in a series of wars and a treaty signed with the British ceding a large area of land, granting freedom of trade and requiring the Sikkimese to build and maintain a road to Tibet. For these amenities the British Government agreed to pay £1,200 a year.

While these preparations were going on, the problem of mapping Tibet was being solved in a manner very frankly described by Lieut.-Colonel L. Austine Waddell, in his book, *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*:

> ". . . When the British government wished, in view of possible contingencies, to get a trustworthy map of the great unknown territory of the Land of the Lamas which for so many hundreds of

[1] In his introduction to his wife's book, *We Tibetans*. His wife was Tibetan.
[2] Turner in *Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama*.

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Girl from herdsmen's areas between Lhasa and Shigatze

Young Tibetan girl tries her hand at photography

Herdsmen of Dungshala Mountain loading straw on their yaks

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LUCKNOW.

miles marched with the frontiers of India, it had to employ as its secret surveying spies, for the most part Tibetans, who had settled on our side of the Himalayas as naturalised British subjects, and whose Mongoloid features assisted in their disguise. . . . [They were trained] to the use of the prismatic compass, to plot out routes, understand maps, read the sextant, recognise the fixed stars, use the boiling-point thermometer for altitudes, etc. . . . Nain Sing, disguised as a merchant of Ladak . . . did most of his surveying under cover of his prayer wheel and rosary. When he saw anyone approaching he at once began to twirl his prayer wheel, and as all good Buddhists while doing that are supposed to be absorbed in religious thoughts, he was very seldom disturbed. His prayer-wheel, instead of the usual prayer scrolls, contained long strips of paper for recording the compass-bearings of places and the number of paces between towns, etc.; and afterwards, as it was always exempt from customs house examination, it secreted a compass. His rosary, instead of the usual one hundred and eight beads, was made up of one hundred as counters for his paces—at every hundred paces he dropped a bead. . . .

"My own private attempt to reach Lhasa from the Nepal side, in the summer of 1892, in the disguise of a Tibetan pilgrim, with surveying instruments secreted in prayer-wheels, hollow walking-sticks and false-bottomed baskets, was frustrated. . . . To escape detection was well-nigh impossible for a European, as every headman of every village in Central and Western Tibet has for many years been held responsible by the Lhasa Lamas, under penalty of death, that no foreigner should pass through or receive shelter in his village."

It seemed gratuitous for Waddell to add, a few pages later, "It was no mere light-hearted curiosity to see the Forbidden Land which led to the dispatch of the armed British mission to Tibet in December 1903", and he offers the explanation that it was all due to "the aggressive hostility of the Tibetans themselves."

This was the heyday of imperial complacency, when spying was written off as heroism and annexation as legitimate. Even as late as 1926, Louis King expressed his shocked incredulity at the Tibetans' failure to keep to Whitehall rules while being annexed. "The Tibetans now, in 1886, took action on their own part against us", he wrote.[1]

[1] *We Tibetans.*

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"It would appear that they considered Sikkim to be feudatory to Lhasa, though this State had in fact accrued to us in result of our war with Nepal in 1814-16. And they took the unusual course of proffering this claim by sending armed forces across the frontier and occupying a post there." King added that Great Britain took up this matter with China, "to whom we were now accustomed to look in regard to Tibetan affairs".

Tibet also appealed to the Manchu throne for help in driving the British out, but China, defeated in the Opium War by Britain and torn by internal revolt against feudalism, tried to solve the problem by getting the Tibetans to withdraw. They refused and were finally driven out. A treaty recognising Sikkim's annexation was signed in 1890 by the Chinese Amban and Lord Lansdowne, Viceroy of India. Three years later trade regulations under this treaty[1] were signed by a Mr. Paul, Magistrate of Darjeeling; Mr. Hart, the Chinese Customs Commissioner (China's Customs being under British control); and the Chinese Amban. It provided for a trade mart to be opened in Yatung and duty-free imports from India into Tibet.

After the mart was opened by the Chinese Amban, with a Chinese Customs House under British control, the Tibetans and Chinese showed their real attitude to the affair by building a wall across the valley on the Tibet side. Still, the total trade on this route rose from 1,050,304 rupees in 1895, to 1,785,397 rupees in 1899, according to the returns from the Yatung Customs House. Britain complained that this was not enough.

Letters were sent to the Dalai Lama by the British in 1900 and 1901, but were returned unopened or without reply on the grounds that the Dalai Lama could only receive letters from other powers through the Amban.

Britain prepared to invade Tibet.

Whitehall's arguments for this course, repeated in countless variations by dutiful writers of the time and later, were mainly: The Tibetans say they can only negotiate through China; China says she cannot coerce the Tibetans to accept more British goods. Impasse.

[1] No Tibetan was party to these goings on. The *Daily Mail* correspondent, Edmund Candler, in his book, *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, points out that although the most important *Shapé* (Kalon) was present in Darjeeling he was treated with contempt by the British and not asked to participate. Candler wrote: "Unfortunately, during his stay in Darjeeling the *Shapé's* feelings were lacerated by ill-treatment as well as neglect. In an unfortunate encounter with British youth, which was said to have arisen from his jostling an English lady off the path, he was taken by the scruff of the neck and ducked in the public fountain. So he returned to Tibet with no love for the English. . . ."

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Now enters the sinister figure, mysterious, shadowy—the Russian "agent" Dorjieff. Dorjieff was a monk, a Buryat-Mongolian Lama studying at Lhasa's Depung Monastery. It was claimed that Dorjieff was an agent of the Tsar and that Tibet had no right to let in the Russian bear while keeping out the British lion.

No writer of the time claims to know what Dorjieff was supposed to be doing that was so inimical to Britain. Indeed *The Times* Special Correspondent, Perceval Landon, wrote:[1] "What the Russians did in allowing Dorjieff to represent them unofficially in Lhasa, we should have been glad to be able to do, and it is a deplorable thing that the millions of northern Buddhists under our sway do not produce men of the capacity which is exhibited by a Dorjieff . . . if these men were to be found I fancy we should have used them willingly long ago."

Landon's conclusion was: "As it was, there was nothing else to do but intervene and that speedily." In December, 1903, a British force was sent with orders to force a way into Tibet for Colonel (later Sir) Francis Younghusband, of the Political Department. The force was under the command of Brigadier-General J. L. R. MacDonald, fresh from similar exploits in Uganda. It was a convenient moment, because the Russians were then at war with the Japanese, and China was still suffering from the aftermath of the Boxer uprising.

Younghusband's task was to open up Tibet to British trade. Waddell, who accompanied the British force, and this time not in disguise, wrote with genuine jingoistic joy: "The situation was deliciously hit off with blunt frankness in *Punch's* cartoon on the subject, where the Grand Lama, in protesting to John Bull, the peddler, that he does not want the proffered blessing of Free Trade, is told 'You've got to have it!' "[2]

When Younghusband reached Lhasa after an eight months' campaign, in August, 1904, it was to find the Dalai Lama fled and a Regent acting in his place. Camping below the Potala, he negotiated a treaty which recognised the British annexation of Sikkim, provided for three trade marts, at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok, and made Tibet as far as possible a British sphere of influence.[3]

Successive failures of the Chinese throne to rescue its subject had

[1] Perceval Landon, *Lhasa*, 1905 Edn. [2] *Op. cit.*

[3] Article IX of the Treaty stipulated that "Without the consent of Great Britain no Tibetan territory shall be sold, leased or mortgaged to any foreign power whatsoever . . . no foreign Power shall be permitted to send either official or non-official persons to Tibet, no matter in what pursuit they may be engaged . . . [or] to construct roads or railways or erect telegraphs or open mines anywhere in Tibet. . . ." The Treaty continued to treat Tibet as part of China and the Hans as non-foreign.

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reduced Han prestige among all Tibetans. They had been abandoned to the mercy of the British. Relations deteriorated even more sharply when the Dalai Lama visited Peking in his wanderings after the British invasion and was forced to kow-tow to the Imperial throne, which had failed to protect him, and received the title: "Loyally Submissive Vice-Regent." And in 1909, when he was on his way back to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama found that the Chinese General Chao Erh-feng was advancing on Lhasa, destroying monasteries and committing atrocities. He fled again, this time to India.

When the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown in 1911, the Thirteenth Dalai was able to return to Lhasa, but he was never able to withdraw Tibet from the sphere of imperialist intrigue. When he had turned to the Manchus, he had found that they wanted to destroy Tibetan local self-government and relegate the monasteries to purely religious functions. Now he had turned to Britain only to find that Whitehall's purpose also was to annex Tibet and remove secular power from the monasteries. For now entered Sir Charles Bell—Britain's reply to Dorjieff—not the "northern Buddhist" that Landon prayed for, but a Foreign Office man who had assisted in the Younghusband expedition, had a thorough knowledge of Tibetan and from 1908 was put in charge of British relations with Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim.

Soon after the Chinese Revolution and the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa from his second flight, a conference was called at Simla in 1913 between representatives of the Chinese government, the Dalai Lama and Britain, where Britain pressed for an agreement splitting Tibet into Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet (as seen from China). Outer Tibet was to remain an autonomous region under the Dalai Lama, with a Chinese Amban stationed in Lhasa, and Inner Tibet, which had been overrun by Han troops, was to remain directly under Chinese rule.

This was regarded by the Dalai Lama as an act of British treachery and was also repudiated by Peking. Fighting broke out which resulted in the Tibetan army occupying much of the disputed area and also in further British intervention. This was when the British Consul, Eric Teichman, stepped in to mediate.[1]

After the First World War, Bell was recalled from retirement to undertake a special mission to Lhasa. In his book about this mission,[2] he disclosed that his task was to push through an arrangement with Tibet under which Britain would supply arms to Tibet; Britain would

[1] Eric Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, 1922.
[2] *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, 1946.

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train Tibetan troops and also train workers to make explosives and rifles; Britain would provide mining prospectors and mining machinery; the telegraph from India to Gyantse would be extended to Lhasa; a school would be opened at Gyantse for upper-class Tibetans, with an English headmaster.

Bell's policy came up against stiff opposition in Lhasa, where he spent several months working hard on the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders. Especially, Bell wrote, he enlisted the help of the wealthiest Tibetan—Tsarong—a rare example of one who rose from the commonalty to power in one lifetime. According to Bell and others, he was not born with the name Tsarong, but was the son of an arrow-maker, an occupation of low caste, and himself the servant of a monk who served in the Jewel Park, the Dalai Lama's summer palace. He came to the notice of the Dalai Lama and became his favourite. Soon after the Dalai returned to Lhasa after his stay in Darjeeling, Tsarong was chosen by His Holiness to marry the heiresses of the great Tsarong family, whose head and only son had been put to death. He married the daughter of the house and the widow of Tsarong's son, took over the family name, and never looked back. He was quickly made a Kalon and commander-in-chief of the army as well as master of the mint.

Bell wrote that Tsarong strongly favoured the policy he had been sent to achieve, "but the general reaction of the people is one of strong opposition, especially among the priesthood". There were rumours that Bell's secret policy was to develop a new and bigger Tibetan army under Tsarong's command and use it to break the power of the monasteries and establish Tsarong and the lay nobles as a secular government that would be weak enough to be forced to rely on the British and strong enough with British backing to separate Tibet from China.

Posters began to go up on the walls of Lhasa demanding Bell's death. Unrest grew among the monks in the great monasteries. Several thousand monks marched to demand an interview with the Dalai Lama and were dispersed. But Bell got agreement that his points would go through and left Lhasa in October, 1921, feeling very satisfied, to judge from his writings, that he had gained a victory over the Chinese and the new Soviet Union.

Some hitch seems to have occurred, because a few months later another Britisher, William McGovern, was sent to Lhasa, travelling in disguise. He had already contacted Tsarong and the Dalai Lama when

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his presence in Lhasa was discovered and a crowd surrounded his house demanding his death.

McGovern wrote a book[1] in which he showed very clearly what he thought to be the British Foreign Office policy at the time. McGovern said that there was a "court party" supported by the lay-nobility and a priestly party:

> ". . . The court party is pro-British, while the priestly party is strongly anti-British and pro-Chinese. . . .
>
> "Today the power of the court party is gradually on the increase, but it is interesting to speculate upon what will take place on the death of the present Dalai Lama. Will Tsarong seize the reins of government and declare himself king, as it is sometimes whispered may be the case, or will he, perhaps more astutely, be instrumental in the choice of an infant Dalai Lama of a type that can be moulded to his own point of view and way of thinking? Or will a very old prophecy be fulfilled, namely, that the thirteenth Dalai Lama will be the last, that after his death Tibet will be opened up to the 'white barbarians' of the West and the title of Dalai Lama will be but a memory of the past?"

None of McGovern's wide range of speculations came true. The Chinese Revolution, the rise of the Communist Party and the Kuomintang, sweeping through China and unifying it on a wave of popular support had their effect on Tibetan thinking. Here seemed to be a Han government capable of giving the help that had never come from the previous ones.

First the Panchen Lama fled to Chinghai Province, fearful of his life because of his opposition to the pro-British policies being followed in Lhasa. Next the Dalai Lama also began to turn back towards China. Bell wrote sadly:

"By 1925 the Dalai Lama was turning strongly away from Britain towards China. . . . Our old friend, Tsarong, the former commander-in-chief, who was always very pro-British, lost most of his power and was subsequently degraded. . . . During those years there was a manifest tendency for the two leaders of Tibet, the Dalai and Panchen, to turn to China." Bell attempted no explanation for this.

When Chiang Kai-shek turned and attacked the Communists, his allies, after the death of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, China was again plunged into dissension under the Kuomintang, and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama

[1] *To Lhasa in Disguise.*

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returned to his old policy of trying to play off the British against the ineffectual central authorities. When he died in 1933, Tibet was more and more becoming a British sphere.

I met Tsarong several times in Lhasa. He is now a man of sixty-eight years—an old man in Tibet, where the merciless play of rare atmosphere and extremes of climate many times a day seems to burn people out soon after they are fifty. It was at the first Tibetan-style party I had ever attended, held under a great tent of white canvas and blue *appliqué*. Tables were spread under it on the grass and all the nobility of Lhasa were eating and drinking with young P.L.A. officers and girls, nurses from the People's Hospital and many high monk officials. Lobsam Samtem, brother of the Dalai Lama and himself one of the highest monk officials, was wandering round speaking good Han and toasting every one in cold tea. I went off to take some photographs.

When I returned to my table I found a shrewd-looking man with a craggy face and eyes almost buried in pouches, the inevitable two top-knots and gold *gao* perched on a balding head. It was Tsarong, the Croesus of Tibet. He was playing the Chinese finger game with a P.L.A. general and beating him handsomely. This is a game in which two people simultaneously extend any number of fingers of one hand while guessing the aggregate number extended by both. When one person guesses correctly, the other must take a drink.

As I sat down Tsarong apologised to me for his lack of English, but he was enough conversant with the language to pass a few pleasantries. He took me on at the finger game, playing to force each other to drink glasses of brandy. After I had lost three times and downed three glasses in succession I gave him best.

The ramifications of Tsarong's family are enormous. At one affair some little children came in to dance. Tsarong presented me to a small boy of eight, his youngest son, and to a girl of about the same age, one of his granddaughters. His older daughters are some of the most beautiful women of Lhasa, a city of beautiful women, and speak English with great fluency, having been at school in Darjeeling.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

TIBET, INDIA AND CHINA

His Serenity refuses—America moves—Atom-bomb metal and Garand rifles—No visas for Hong Kong—The Chinese army marches, and stops —Delicate exchanges between China and India—Agreement

TIBET severely tested the relations between newly-independent India and the new Chinese People's Republic, and was at the same time a test of colonial strength in the area.

China's present leaders are very frank about the reasons why relations between Tibet and preceding Chinese régimes deteriorated to the point of virtual extinction. They use the Chinese saying, "Eight ounces, half a pound", which means: "Six of one is half a dozen of the other". It would have been absurd to expect imperialists to behave other than as themselves, they say, but also the Manchu, Yuan Shih-kai and Kuomintang governments made no attempt to foster a united effort with the Tibetans to get rid of foreign influences. They wavered before the imperialists and got tough with the Tibetans, thus contributing to the policy of division which enabled Britain, with never more than a fingerhold in Tibet, to exert decisive influence.

When the Dalai Lama died in 1933, the Panchen Lama was still in the Chinghai Province of China, where he had fled ten years before. This put the highest pontiff of the Yellow Sect out of British reach, and the possibility that China would reassert her suzerainty over Tibet worried Whitehall. A British mission was hastily sent, but its leader, Williamson, could not stand the altitude and died on reaching Lhasa. Another mission went in 1936, led by B. J. Gould and taking as its secretary F. Spencer Chapman, who later wrote a book, *Lhasa: The Holy City*, in which he disclosed that the prime motive of the British Government had been to get the Panchen Lama back to Tibet. To this end, he wrote, the mission was empowered to go as far as Jyekundo, near the Yangtse River, "to meet His Serenity and escort him back to the Holy City".

However, His Serenity flatly refused to put himself at the mercy of the British and insisted on having an escort of Chinese troops. After months of bickering, the mission had to return to India without

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success. Chapman also wrote: "It was part of Bell's policy that the British Government should supply arms and munitions to the Tibetan Government and should train a certain number of officers in India. The Cabinet are anxious that we should continue this policy." So when it became clear that the Panchen Lama could not be used to take the place of the departed Dalai Lama, the British Cabinet decided to maintain a permanent mission in Lhasa, and Chapman wrote: "And when the main body of the Mission left for India, Richardson was left behind to suggest an element of permanency . . .", a task in which he succeeded so well that he was still there in 1950, fourteen years later.

He was there when Lowell Thomas and his son made their trip to Tibet in 1949, and Lowell Thomas, Jr., commented:[1] "Since India achieved its independence in 1947, the British in India's diplomatic service have been replaced one after another by Indians. Hugh Richardson, the competent and popular head of the Indian mission to Lhasa, was the last Briton in India's foreign service. . . . Hugh Richardson may soon come to America for a tour of lecturing, followed by a professorship at one of our leading universities."

This was not the first time that America had shown an interest in Tibet. William Montgomery McGovern, who went to Lhasa in disguise, became a professor at Northwestern University in the U.S. During the Second World War agents of the Office of Strategic Services penetrated into Tibet and surveyed it from ground and air. When, in 1942, the Kashag suddenly set up a Bureau of Foreign Affairs,[2] the Chinese claimed that America and Britain had instigated this with an eye to the post-war situation.

Among "well-informeds" it was also regarded as significant that after the war Britain took the initiative in sending a letter to the Chinese government restating that Tibet was part of China, a fact which Britain had been denying for some time previously. The great powers, including America, joined Britain in confirming this, but recognition of China's control of Tibet was made at a time when India was still under direct British control and China was indirectly under American, through Chiang Kai-shek. Indian independence and the sweeping victories of the Chinese People's Liberation Army,

[1] Lowell Thomas, Jr., *Out of This World*, 1950.

[2] In 1953 this office was fused with the Office of the Assistant in Foreign Affairs in Lhasa (the organ of the central authorities there). Under the 1951 agreement the Chinese government must be responsible for Tibet's foreign relations. The former Tibetan Chief of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Liushahr Dzaza Lama, is now Vice-Director of the new joint organisation. The Director is Yang Kung-hsu, of the Peking Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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threatening the very existence of the Kuomintang, changed all this and a campaign was begun for Tibetan "independence".

In November, 1947, three months after India gained her independence, what was described as a trade mission went from Lhasa to Britain and the United States, led by Tsepon Shakabpa. At that time the total volume of Tibetan trade was less than £500,000 yearly, and it was widely speculated that there must be some other motive behind the delegation's prolonged stay in America. In Hong Kong the American Consulate publicly insulted the Chiang Kai-shek régime by entering visas into passports issued by the Lhasa Bureau of Foreign Affairs instead of into Kuomintang passports, which America's recognition of Chiang required should be used. Even the Kuomintang protested at this.

In 1949 Peking fell and the P.L.A. swept southwards. Chiang Kai-shek's armies and government fell apart and the Chinese People's Republic was set up. In July that year, when it was already obvious that Chiang Kai-shek was finished, there were already reports that America was preparing to recognise Tibet as a sovereign state and to support a Tibetan application for membership of the United Nations. On July 8 the Lhasa authorities expelled all Chiang Kai-shek officials from Lhasa in what became known as the "Tibetan coup", and a month later the N.B.C. commentator Lowell Thomas and his son arrived fully equipped with the latest electronic devices to "sell" the world on Tibetan separation from China—now "Red" China.

Lowell Thomas saw General MacArthur in Tokyo on his way to Lhasa via India. According to Heinrich Harrer,[1] the Thomases spent a week in Lhasa as the basis for "a world-wide publicity campaign in favour of Tibetan independence". The English language magazine, *People's China*, on December 1, 1950, said that Thomas had been met by an American military plane on his return to the India border. But in his book about the trip—*Out of This World*—his son denied that Thomas had gone to Lhasa as a "special government agent". Thomas, Jr., disclosed that American interest was in part due to an earlier British Foreign Office report that "mineral deposits of unascertainable value" had been found in Tibet, and he said: "The London dispatch implied that this new find was radio-active metal—the material of the atom bomb." Thomas, Jr., also made it clear that they had other things in mind than "publicity". "The most important requirement, of course, is skilful guerrilla forces", he wrote. "To create these, Tibet needs arms

[1] *Seven Years in Tibet*, 1953.

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and advice, principally from outside. Arms would include weapons specially adapted to guerrilla warfare, such as Garand rifles, machine guns, mortars, grenades and mines."

Tibetan opinion was divided on what to do about the altered situation in China. Some Tibetan leaders were opposed to any suggestion of returning to China. They argued that experiences with the past three Peking régimes had been enough, and these, moreover, were Communist Hans who did not believe in Lamaism and would not permit Tibet to remain under religious rule. Others argued that for the first time China had a strong and united government able to help the Tibetans and prevent foreign annexation. One of these, Shakdodon, "Minister for War" in the council of the Lady of De-Ge, issued a call that Tibetans should help the P.L.A. "to plant the five-starred red flag of China on the Himalayas".

In the end it was decided that negotiations should be begun with the new People's Government. In February, 1950, a Tibetan delegation led by the same Shakabpa who led the delegation to America left Lhasa to go to Peking through India. There were no roads at that time and it should have been quicker to reach Peking by that route than by horseback over the mountains in winter. In fact, it proved much slower. Once they got to India, the Peking *People's Daily* reported: "The British High Commissioner in New Delhi, Sir Archibald Nye and other colonialists, used all their arts to dissuade the delegation from reaching agreement with the Central People's Government."

The British authorities refused to issue visas for the Tibetans to go through Hong Kong, and while all this was going on the Tibetans "deployed strong armed forces at Changtu (Chamdo) in Sikang Province[1] in the interior of China", according to a note from the Chinese Government to the Indian Government.

Exchanges were taking place between the Chinese and Indian governments on the Tibetan question, but the Tibetan delegation remained in India, still without visas.

June, 1950, came and went. The American forces in Korea had landed at Inchon and were driving up the peninsula. General MacArthur was already threatening to cross the Yalu River and carry the war into China. Truman had ordered the American Seventh Fleet to encircle Taiwan (Formosa) to protect Chiang Kai-shek's "jumping-off ground" for an attack against China. There was talk that Vietnam

[1] Changtu is the Chinese name for Chamdo, and it was at that time in Sikang, the province that has now been partly included in Tibet and partly in Szechuan.

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also could be used as a base in a many-pronged invasion effort to reverse the victory of the P.L.A. over the Kuomintang armies. The *Kwangming Daily* commented: "America and Britain have been making energetic efforts to keep their control of Tibet so that it may be used as a continental base for the invasion of China."

Later in the year it was disclosed that at the end of August the Chinese Government had informed the Indian Government that the P.L.A. would soon take action in the Chamdo area in accordance with set plans. Their note urged the Indians to facilitate the departure of the Tibetan delegation so that it could arrive in Peking by mid-September. If the delegation failed to arrive within September it must bear the consequences, the Chinese Government said.

It failed to arrive and the P.L.A. marched. By October 19 the P.L.A. had crossed 700 miles of plateau, eight major mountain ranges, the upper reaches of the Yangtse, Mekong and Salween rivers and taken Chamdo, capturing the British radio-operator, Ford, in the process.

In the battle for Chamdo, the *New China News Agency* announced, 2,969 rifles were captured, of which 2,578 were of British manufacture, made in Birmingham. A whole regiment of the Tibetan army crossed over to the P.L.A., and its commander, Sangye Wangdui, cabled to Mao Tse-tung: "We have always hated the imperialists, but in the past we had no way to resist them. Now we have the help of our brothers of the P.L.A. and can drive them out of Tibet. . . . We have seen the excellent discipline and correct behaviour of the P.L.A. and we know we have taken the correct course."

General Liu Po-Cheng, commander of the P.L.A. in the area, issued a statement guaranteeing Tibet regional self-government, freedom of religion, protection of the monasteries and respect for Tibetan customs. No change would be made in Tibet's political or military systems. Monks, officials, nobles, chieftains should remain at their posts, the general announced, and no action would be taken against them. "The P.L.A. is an army of the various nationalities of China", the statement went on. "It is a strictly disciplined army. It will respect the Tibetan people's religious beliefs as well as their traditional habits and local customs. The P.L.A. will be polite in speech, fair in business dealings and will not take a single thread from the people. Compensation will be paid at market prices for any damage. Appropriate payment will be made for hiring workers and draught animals. No person will be conscripted and no livestock taken."

At the same time the P.L.A. released its Tibetan prisoners (there

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had been very few casualties), gave them back their British rifles, gave them money and animals for their return journey and sent them back with General Liu's statement to tell others about their experiences with the P.L.A.

On October 24 the P.L.A. announced that it intended to continue its advance into Tibet "proper".

Four days later the Indian Government sent a note to the Chinese Government saying that the Tibetan delegation had "actually left Delhi" on the 25th, the day after the P.L.A. announcement. "We realise there has been regrettable delay in the Tibetan delegation's proceeding to Peking", the Indian note said. "This delay was caused in the first instance by inability to obtain visas for Hong Kong."

Peking replied at once, on October 30, that "The Tibetan delegation, under outside instigation, has intentionally delayed the date of its departure for Peking". The Chinese government went on to say that it still wanted to settle the Tibetan question in a peaceful manner, but could not brook the interference of others in a domestic affair.

India replied, raising the matter of privileges in Tibet that had been inherited from the British. These included, the Indian note said: the presence of an agent of the Indian government at Lhasa; the existence of trade agencies at Gyantse and Yatung; maintenance of telegraphs and posts on the trade route and "for the protection of this trade route a small military escort has been stationed at Gyantse for over forty years". (In fact, since the Younghusband invasion.) "The government of India are anxious that these establishments which . . . do not detract in any way from Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, should continue", the note said.

China immediately welcomed the Indian Government's statement in the note that it had "no political or territorial ambitions in Tibet". This Chinese note, the last in this exchange, said: "As long as our two sides adhere strictly to the principle of mutual respect for territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, we are convinced that the friendship between China and India will develop normally, and that problems of Sino-Indian diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations in connection with Tibet can be solved properly and to our mutual benefit through normal diplomatic channels." The P.L.A.'s advance into Tibet, the note emphasised, was "an important measure to maintain Chinese independence, to prevent the imperialist aggressors from dragging the world towards war and to defend peace".

It was a turning-point in Asian history. India had recognised China's

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centuries-old suzerainty over Tibet; China had indicated willingness to solve the problems raised by India to the two countries' mutual benefit. The two new republics, which between them embraced about a third of humanity, faced each other on an issue which had all the ingredients for an international clash leading anywhere. The British were still powerfully entrenched in many positions in India (Richardson only left Tibet in September, 1950); the Americans were pushing their tiny client state, El Salvador, into raising the "Tibet Question" at the United Nations, which body was then officially, even if illegally, fighting in Korea against Chinese volunteers; the unspoken promise was held out that an "independent" Tibet could be a sphere of influence of India. It was small wonder that the stresses and tugs on the Tibetan delegation and on the new Indian government were tremendous.

Nothing more was said in public; but Chinese troops did *not* advance beyond Chamdo and the Tibetan delegation *did* go from India to Peking, where it negotiated an agreement.

The solution of this problem and the subsequent settlement by negotiation of India's privileges in Tibet set the course for relations between China and India and had repercussions that are still growing in Asia. It was in this exchange of notes that four points are found—"mutual respect for territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit"—which subsequently grew into the five principles for peaceful coexistence jointly stated by the Chinese and Indian premiers in 1954 and by many others subsequently.

While these exchanges were going on and the Tibetan delegation was delayed in India, local chiefs, Living Buddhas, merchants, nomads and others in Chamdo set up a "working committee for the peaceful liberation of Tibet", which issued a call to the Lhasa authorities to send the delegation to Peking by whatever means and whatever route. This committee became the Chamdo People's Liberation Committee, which is now the temporary local government of the Chamdo region. It will shortly join the rest of Tibet under a single autonomous government.

During those months, also, hundreds of Tibetan officers and men were arriving in Lhasa after their release by the P.L.A. and were telling of their experiences. According to Heinrich Harrer,[1] who was there at the time ". . . the Chinese troops had shown themselves disciplined and tolerant, and the Tibetans who had been captured and then released were saying how well they had been treate'd'.

[1] Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet.*

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They described how different this army was from any previous Han army, how it paid for everything and refused to accept *ula* (forced transport), that it consulted the local Tibetan leaders on everything it did and respected Tibetan religious and social customs. They reported that the tax on tea had been cut by 50 per cent. and that 2,400 tons of tea had been supplied to the Chamdo area in the last six months of 1950. High prices were being paid for musk, borax, wool and other Tibetan products and things were generally in a very flourishing state in Chamdo.

The Tibetan delegation arrived in Peking in the latter half of April, 1951: part from India and part from Chamdo. Ngabou Kalon led the delegation for the Dalai Lama's group and the Panchen Lama himself also arrived in Peking from Sian with a large body of officials and attendants.

I remember, on May Day, 1951, in the central square of Peking, how the splashing seas of coloured silk borne by the marchers on the square quite failed to dull the blazing brocades, gilt helmets, red sashes, red, white and blue embroidered boots and gold-mounted turquoise of the Tibetan delegation on the viewing stands. I wondered then what impression it made to see in a few hours a crowd more than half as big as the whole population of Tibet pass before them. On the highest rostrum with Mao Tse-tung and other government leaders were the Panchen Lama and Ngabou Kalon—the first meeting between the Dalai and Panchen groups for nearly thirty years.

Three weeks later an agreement[1] was signed whose first clause said: "The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet; the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the motherland—the People's Republic of China."

The other sixteen clauses largely followed the lines of the statement made at the time the P.L.A. was ordered to march into Chamdo. They put on record that Tibet had the right to national regional autonomy within the Chinese Republic and that the central authorities would not alter the political system or the status of the Grand Lamas. Freedom of religion was guaranteed and there was to be no interference with the income of the monasteries. Reforms in Tibet would not be compulsory; the living conditions of the Tibetan people would be improved in accordance with the actual conditions of the region. Demands

[1] Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. May 23, 1951. See Appendix for full text.

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for reform raised by the people would be settled in consultation with the Tibetan leaders. Officials would retain their positions regardless of their past associations. Foreign affairs would be under the control of the central authorities and eventually the Tibetan army would be reorganised into the P.L.A.

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State Museum
LUCKNOW.

Monk policeman

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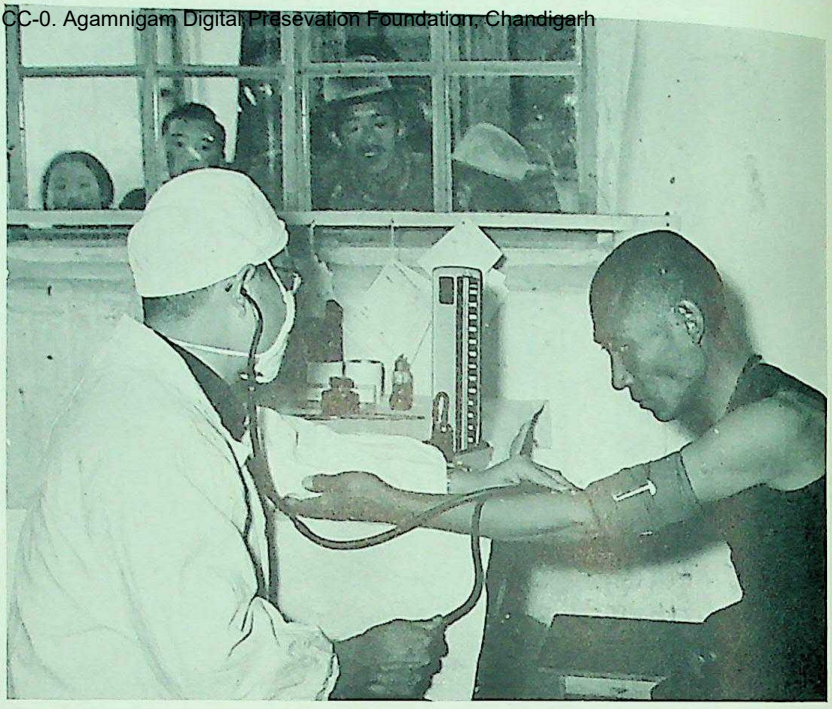

A monk has his blood-pressure checked

Over the Bramaputra, women wearing local headdress

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TEA WITH THE DALAI LAMA

Finding The Fourteenth Body—Jewel Park—God in horn-rimmed spectacles —"Tell the truth about Tibet"—Lamaism and war: a message to all Buddhists—"Tibet will become socialist"

ARRANGEMENTS to meet the Dalai Lama have to be made two days ahead; a rule called "two days' information". This time is in any case useful to master the strict ceremonial procedure required when meeting the young God-King, the reincarnation of Chenresi, the All-Embracing Lama, Holder of the Thunderbolt, Precious Protector, who has sacrificed the opportunity of entering Buddhahood and "Passing Beyond Sorrow", and has time and again returned to earth in different bodies to help all living things attain a higher stage.

It is glory for any Tibetan to see the Dalai Lama. Even for the highest official it is glorious, most wonderful, to receive the Dalai Lama's hand on the head in blessing. For most people, even holy pilgrims, the blessing is merely by flicking the head with a whisk of hair. There are only three occasions in a year when the Dalai Lama can be seen by the common people. Even when he watches plays at the Potala and his summer palace, he is hidden, sitting in a room above everyone else and looking through a curtain of gauze. The way to the Dalai Lama is guarded by many soldiers and the Dalai Lama's person by gigantic monk police.

The present Dalai Lama, the Fourteenth Body, was born in June, 1935, near Lake Koko Nor in China, eighteen months after the death of the Thirteenth. Three names were submitted by the Ninth Panchen Lama, then a voluntary exile from Tibet in Chinghai Province. One of the boys named, the present Dalai Lama, came successfully through the tests made to check that the soul of Chenresi has entered the child's body. For one thing, he had prominent ears and two marks on the body supposed to represent the places where the two other arms of the god would be. One of the monks who was searching for the reincarnation entered the peasant house of the boy's parents dressed in poor layman's clothes so that nobody should know there was a search for the new Dalai Lama. But the little boy, then only two, rushed forward and called him "Lama". He is said to have picked out an old rosary

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and walking-stick belonging to the previous Dalai Lama from more attractive new ones and generally provided adequate proof of being the Fourteenth Body. All the members of his peasant family were immediately ennobled and made rich with enormous grants of government land. Now he is twenty-one and, with the twenty-year-old Panchen, has the task of steering Tibet's ancient society through changes even greater than those which occurred under King Songtsan Gambo.

On meeting the Dalai Lama, the visitor must present a *nangdzu hata* —a ceremonial scarf of the finest quality silk, 6 feet by 2 feet, specially made for presentation to the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. Until the moment of presentation this is held rolled up in a special manner by an orderly. He hands it to the visitor, who unrolls it and lays it across his own palms so that, with his hands outside those of the Dalai Lama, he can transfer the *hata* without touching His Holiness. I was warned not to offer my hand to be shaken, because his advisers do not like him to shake hands, and unless he proffered his hand I should only present the scarf. There are various forms in which the Dalai Lama may return this compliment of *hata* presentation. If the Dalai Lama wished to be extremely polite, he might lay a scarf on my neck, which is the way a higher-ranking person presents one to a lower.

My visit was in September, so the Dalai Lama was living in his summer palace, the Jewel Park (*Norbhu Linka*), a walled, forested park less than a mile from the Potala where he lives in the winter. I dismounted from my jeep outside the main gate with its imposing roof and returned the salutes of some high officers of the bodyguard in their almost-British uniform, red collar tabs and long turquoise earrings. Then there was a short walk through a pleasantly wooded lane to the Assembly Room, where the Dalai Lama sits in ceremonial audience. Word came that His Holiness was ready. Then there was another short walk to his private reception-room under the quelling gaze of mountainous monk police with their shoulders padded to make them even more impressive. Silence fell as we mounted the steps to the reception-room and once again there was that sense of concentrated mystery I had felt when approaching Lhasa.

In fact the Dalai Lama walked to meet me, smiling as I laid the *hata* on his wrists, and then shook my hand with a powerful grip and steered me to a soft armchair by a window of the gorgeous reception-room, every inch of which was covered with carved and painted wood, costly brocade or the finest carpets.

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In front of our armchairs were low tables full of fruits, cakes and confectionery, Tibetan bread and fried *tsamba* biscuits. In front of the Dalai Lama was a magnificently chased gold teacup stand and cover and in front of me its twin, worked in plain silver. The Dalai Lama sat smiling gently, almost dreamily; two deep dimples under his cheek-bones, his lips curiously turned up at the corners as he waited, finger-tips lightly touching, for the high officials present to shuffle round and sit down among the swishing of their gold silk. Only the Dalai Lama seemed entirely and smoothly at ease at that moment. Sadu Rinchen, present as interpreter, was licking his lips as he sat at the same level as His Holiness, for this is normally impermissible.

The Dalai Lama sat smiling through horn-rimmed spectacles as the buttered tea was poured, thick and slightly purplish, the best in Tibet. His own special servant poured his from a separate pot. He signalled me to drink and in the same motion picked up his own cup—almost like a conjuror—as though it weighed nothing. His gestures seemed to have no starting point and never quite to finish; his hands seemed never to have a definite posture and yet to be carefully posed in each movement. Part of the gruelling training of Dalai Lamas is devoted to giving them prescribed movements and a mode of gesture whose purpose is to enhance their dignity.

How had I liked the journey? What did I think of Tibet? Did I find things as I expected? What about the climate? Was my house comfortable? What did I think of the new roads? He broke the ice and warmed the atmosphere with a flow of questions and a lift of the eye-brow, an extra tilt of the upturned corners of his mouth. Here at twenty years of age, when I met him, was the ultimate product of Tibetan society and there was no gainsaying its quality. And here was something more, which no Dalai Lama had ever been: Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China.

"Your Holiness," I said, "I have read many books on Tibet and they say that the Tibetan people are hostile to all foreigners and also that Tibet is a bleak, cold and unfriendly place without any resources; a stony desert of mountains. My experience has not been at all like that. I have found the Tibetan people to be most friendly and I have seen some of the richest and most beautiful places in the world here."

With that weightless motion, he picked up a plate of cakes and offered them, took one himself and appeared to nibble it without eating.

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"There have been foreigners in the past—especially Englishmen—who have written books about Tibet," said the Dalai Lama. "They add something; they leave something out. They give an untrue picture, and this has affected Tibet's relations with outside countries to no small extent and has done great harm. I hope that you will write the true facts about Tibet and correct some of these false impressions. I hope that you will tell the world clearly what Tibet is really like."

By this time the buttered tea had been taken away and ordinary cups came round for tea with milk and sugar in the Indian or British style. From that point we settled down to discussion. Throughout our talk he spoke with ease and assurance, without even a glance at the galaxy of advisers around him, on any subject that came up, sometimes leaning forward to stir his tea, or gently lift the cup and appear to take a sip, sometimes leaning back, but still appearing to stop just before the moment of relaxation, fingertips together, smiling, shrewd and composed beyond his years.

No foreigner had seen the Dalai Lama since the signing of the agreement on May 23, 1951, so I first asked him what had happened since then.

"Before the agreement," he said, "Tibet could see no way ahead. Since the agreement Tibet has left the old way that led to darkness and has taken a new way leading to a bright future of development." The Kalon on my right was writing rapidly in a big notebook every word spoken by the God-King. "Especially there has been a great improvement in the relations between the Han and Tibetan nationalities and among the Tibetan people themselves." His glance took in Yang Kung-hsu and Liushahr Dzaza Lama, Chief and Vice-Chief of the Lhasa Foreign Affairs Bureau.

"The Han and Tibetan people came into contact more than 1,000 years ago," he turned to me and went on. "Latterly, owing to the efforts of the Manchus and Kuomintang to oppress our people, national enmity was bred and a very bad situation was created. To these old enmities was added the dissension sowed by foreign imperialists and the slander they spread about the new China. As a result, for some time after the agreement there was not very much confidence in it. But the Tibetan people saw real examples of equality and mutual help and could see that national discrimination and oppression had been ended. Their misgivings were gradually removed and a solidarity grew up which has become stronger day by day.

"Among the Tibetan people all the old hatreds and disunity have

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been replaced by mutual trust." He did not mention the Panchen Lama, but the reference was clearly to the breach between the two Grand Lamas over relations with the British in the early '20s.

I asked His Holiness what had been his impressions of his recent tour of China. He leaned back and, passing his hand over his face, adjusted his spectacles without appearing to touch them. He thought for a few moments and said: "Politically the People's Democratic system with the working class as its leadership and the worker-peasant alliance as its base is a correct system which works above all for the welfare and happiness of the mass of the people.

"There are many different religions and sects in our country and they are all protected by the central authorities so long as they are what they purport to be. Temples and monasteries are being repaired and expanded. Facts like these show that freedom of religion is respected and protected." His "our" clearly meant the whole of China, as when he referred to "our" industry and what "we" were doing.

Nodding his head and speaking a little more rapidly, the young Pontiff went on: "Our economic position is growing stronger. Many things which we formerly could not make we can now make by ourselves. In the north-east, for example, we have considerable achievements in developing State-owned economy and in constructing heavy industrial enterprises which produce the means of production. The people's livelihood has much improved."

I asked: would His Holiness give me an explanation of the Lamaist attitude to war and peace, which I would try to pass on to other religious believers elsewhere? He smiled and nodded.

"According to our religion, there are the comforts of the present life and the comforts of the life beyond. To attain ease in the life beyond, religious believers with high ideals should work selflessly for the welfare of others; while those with ideals which are not so high must nevertheless spend their lives well without harming others even if they are not inspired with the idea of self-sacrifice.

"Therefore to attain comfort in the life beyond, all religious believers, whether of high or low ideals, must oppose war," the Dalai Lama said emphatically. He went on that if war came some would die, some would be bereaved, there would be famine and other disasters resulting from the destruction of resources. These would affect not only the lives of human beings but "even small living things like insects will be cast into distress". "War," he said, using a curious phrase, "is always detrimental to the animate and the inanimate."

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Speaking directly to believers in the faith he heads, His Holiness said: "This is what I would like you to say to Buddhists in other countries. We love peace because, according to our Buddhist doctrines, to harm living things by killing them is the cause of dire suffering in the endless misery of transmigration in the life beyond; but on the other hand to strive altruistically for the comfort of living things is the supreme means by which one proceeds from ease to ease oneself. Therefore world peace accords with our religious doctrine.

"We Tibetans have a deep faith in Buddhism and want it to prosper everlastingly; we love our motherland, which has the policy of promoting religious freedom; we love peace and are working for peace against war and wish to strengthen the world peace movement."

Answering another question about the relations between himself and the Panchen Lama, the Dalai said that the restoration of good relations between them "is a cause for joy among Buddhists of every land."

We turned to international questions. I had said I was anxious to hear the views of His Holiness on the situation between China and India. Fresh tea came and rich Tibetan cakes full of butter which the Dalai Lama pressed me to try.

"The Chinese and Indian peoples have been living as friends for centuries without war. They are neighbours and understand each other," he said. "Both of our peoples have suffered under protracted imperialist oppression and exploitation and naturally have warm friendship toward each other. Sino-Indian relations are developing more solidly every day. Solidarity between the peoples of India and China means uniting the strength of 900 million people inhabiting one-third of the territory of Asia. Such strength will do more than consolidate peace in Asia; it will play a great part in keeping peace throughout the world."

I had already been with the Living God more than two hours, an unprecedented audience both for its length and informality. From time to time as we chatted a medievally clad noble popped in to shoot a few flashlight photos or a few feet of cine film. The Dalai Lama himself was dressed in wine-red cashmere of the finest quality with one arm bare as the order requires, and under his toga wore costly silk embroidered with gold thread. His embroidered boots had soles nearly 2 inches thick and appeared never to have been put to the ground.

We had our last cup of tea as he told me about his talks with Mao

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Tse-tung, whom he described as "leader of all our nationalities". He paused, and went on very slowly to give time for myself and the Kalon by my side to write down what he said.

"I heard Chairman Mao talk on different matters and I received instruction from him. I have come to the firm conviction that the brilliant prospects for the people of China as a whole are also the prospects for us Tibetan people; the path of our entire country is our path and not any other. New China's economic construction is going ahead quickly. Tibet is still backward economically and educationally, but we know definitely that the central authorities and the people and public servants of the more advanced Han nationality will give every possible help to such backward nationalities as ourselves.

"More than that: Chairman Mao said to me that although it is backward at this time, in fifteen or twenty years Tibet will also be able to contribute to the construction of our country. We believe this firmly."

Speaking still more slowly and clearly, he added: "We are also confident that, as a result of our own efforts, helped by the central authorities and the more advanced Hans, we will come to lead a happy socialist life together with the people of the whole country."

He stood up—more accurately, he was no longer sitting down—and the talk was over. It had lasted two and a quarter hours. An official passed him a *hata* which he smilingly placed round my neck and again gripped my hand with that athletic pressure that so belied his other smooth movements. He led the way into the sun to have photographs taken among the trees and flowers. Once more we shook hands and then he was gone with his officials, bodyguard, servants of his all-male household. His own mother, the only woman he may receive, must also be met formally. He seemed to enjoy the talk judging from the gaiety of his clever, mobile face—and I suppose he seldom gets any break from the monotony of study and prayer. It was incredible that he was only twenty years old for he carried himself not only as His Holiness but as a twentieth-century Holiness in horn-rimmed spectacles and representing an ancient society meeting the modern world. There was no trace of his humble birth in the hovel of a peasant. It was an object lesson in the effect of environment.

When I left the Dalai Lama, I was shown round Jewel Park, where he passes most of his life, by his brother, Lobsam Samten. I photographed him in colour standing among masses of flowers coming almost to his shoulders. It was mid-September and the flower beds

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shone with all the familiar flowers of England which grow better at this altitude than at sea-level: hollyhocks, heavy chrysanthemums, asters, phloxes, marigolds and roses.

An enclosure inside Jewel Park with walls about 12 feet high is kept private for the Dalai Lama and can only be entered by him and a few others close to him. It is laid out with careful lack of artificiality, though it is entirely artificial, even to its peaceful lake on which bar-head geese and wild ducks float in perfect confidence that this is Tibet, where wild life is sacred. On stone supports in the lake are two little buildings, a temple and a summer pavilion which has one open-fronted room and a rest-room behind. There is a small table with one of the Dalai Lama's gold teacup stands and covers, beside which I noticed a small copper coin whose significance, if any, nobody knew. Round the lake and enclosure great mastiffs tugged on iron chains, their thick necks made thicker by collars of tufted red wool to protect their throats. Constantly chained, they hurl themselves in livid fury at any stranger. I flinched as the great, slobbering mouth came at me, silent and purposeful, until the chain jerked it back.

As we strolled round I told Lobsam Samten of my impressions of his younger brother, the Dalai Lama. Lobsam Samten, himself a young monk, is the *Djijap Khenpo*, the Lord Chamberlain of the Dalai Lama and chief of the monk officials of Tibet; higher than the Secretariat itself. Because the movements of the Dalai Lama are strictly limited by his exalted position, the Chamberlain has great power. He has learned Han and we were able to talk without interpreters. I said I had been very impressed by the Dalai Lama's manifest ability and strength of character. Lobsam Samten smiled wryly and commented: "When he went to Peking he was no more than a boy. He learned many things there and when he came back he could take decisions for himself." This tallied with what I had heard from a high official, Djen Lojen, who had spent many years in exile. "After the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama," he said, "the government here became like a shop. When I left Kalimpong to return here after 1951, people said to me: 'You will soon buy yourself a Kalonship.' But actually things are not like that now and are getting better, because His Holiness is strong and favours unity with China."

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE FIRST JEEP TO SHIGATSE

The Rice Heap—Among the nomads—The highest point of the world's highest road—First wheels in the Bramaputra Valley—Tibetan council houses—Long arms and short sleeves

WHEN the road-builders reached Lhasa, they did not stop, but began pushing the new road westward right to the Himalayas. The white, sandy road sweeps through the Holy City, below the Potala and through the western gate, past Jewel Park and Depung Monastery and out into the high grasslands. Between Lhasa and Shigatse, seat of the Panchen Lama, is the highest section of the highest road in the world. It was due to be opened by October 20, but highway bureau reports said that jeeps could probably get through before that day. With the hope of even getting as far as Gyantse, I set off on October 4. I was very keen to see the town where the British and Tibetans had fought for several months in 1904, and the idea of being the first traveller over the still unfinished road was exciting in itself.

About five miles out of Lhasa is Depung Monastery, "The Rice Heap", as its name means—biggest monastery in the world, with up to 100,000 monks sometimes in residence. The aptness of its name can only be seen from a distance, when it looks like a shallow mound of rice poured into the triangular opening between mountain spurs. It is the biggest of the three "Pillars of the State", but perhaps not so influential as the smaller Sera Monastery, where the Dalai Lama was educated.

My visit to Depung had been arranged and, as the heavy doors of what is actually a walled city inhabited exclusively by men creaked open, two monk police stepped forward, their square, padded under-jackets giving them a menacing appearance of strength. They carried heavy staffs tipped with metal. These two proctors were accompanied by two lictors in tattered monastic robes and carrying long sticks. They went ahead of the proctors, jumping and cavorting along the uneven winding streets and steps of the monastery shouting, "*Pha gyuk*" ("Get out of the way"). Monks standing in doorways or peeking from windows and side alleys melted away, disappearing and reappearing like magic as we toured the monastic town.

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Time has stood still for more than 1,000 years in Tibet's monasteries. Nothing exists in Depung that did not exist in its present form ten centuries or more ago, except the wrist-watches, which seem to be as indispensable to high monks as their rosaries. In the kitchens, black with centuries of yak-dung smoke, are copper vats at least 6 feet across used for boiling the monastery's buttered-tea which, with *tsamba*, makes the main diet of the monks. Age, glamorous and fusty, lovely and squalid, is stamped into every building and the countless holy relics which it houses. Under roofs of gold plate are hundreds of dusty images, each with its own history and many said to have been self-created and to have spoken words miraculously. A fortune could not buy the contents of even a single chapel.

Depung's thousands of monks are divided into colleges, each with its own abbot, temple and garden. They are sub-divided into houses where the well-to-do monks have their own rooms which are inherited family property, and the poor ones live in great bare dormitories. In one abbot's reception-room there was a heavy raw-hide whip which had obviously seen considerable use. Absolute obedience is demanded of the student and low-grade monks. Nearly all monks enter the cloth before they are ten and remain in the lowest grade, doing menial work all their lives. A few manage to learn to read and write and so can take examinations and perhaps move up into the next grade. It takes thirty or forty years of memorising the scriptures to qualify for the high monastic positions, but wealth and influence speed the process.

At the end of my tour round dim, smoke-varnished chapels and living quarters, drinking cup after cup of buttered tea and eating innumerable biscuits and dried apricots, the abbots sat round and answered questions about Lamaism and monastic life.

I looked down over the sandy, alluvial plain exactly as the monks of Depung must have seen it fifty years ago when Younghusband's force threatened to shell the monastery if they refused to turn over their stores.

This occasion was described by Edmund Candler, who covered the Younghusband expedition for the *Daily Mail*:[1]

"General Macdonald, with a strong force of British and native troops, drew up within 1,300 yards of the monastery, guns were trained on Depung, the infantry were deployed, and we waited the

[1] *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, 1905.

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expiration of the period of grace intimated in the letter. . . . It seemed the most difficult thing in the world to save these poor fools from the effects of their obstinate folly. The time limit had nearly expired, the two batteries were advanced 300 yards, the gunners took their sights again, and trained the 10-pounders on the very centre of the monastery. . . . At last a thin line of red-robed monks was seen to issue from the gate and descend the hill, each carrying a bag of supplies. The crisis was over, and we were spared the necessity of inflicting a cruel punishment. . . .

"The Depung incident shows how difficult it was to make any headway with the Tibetans without recourse to arms. We were present in the city to insist on compliance with our demands. But an amicable settlement seemed hopeless, and we could not stay in Lhasa indefinitely. What if these monks were to say, 'You may stay here if you like. We will not molest you, but we refuse to accept your terms?' We could only retire or train our guns on the Potala. Retreat was, of course, impossible."

We walked back down the path taken by that "thin line of red-robed monks" half a century before; the lictors still pranced ahead shouting, and thousands of half-invisible monks peered at us. Beyond the gates and past the temple of the State Oracle the jeeps were waiting on the road.

Fifty miles and two and a half hours later, I was on the high grasslands at 15,000 feet, where the air is so thin that nomads will only visit Lhasa in the winter, finding the capital's "lowland" climate at 12,800 feet too oppressive in the summer.

For a distance of almost thirty miles beyond Lhasa, rows of round pebbles had been placed on each side of the road, each pebble touching the next, and every few yards stone "pagodas" had been made by balancing round boulders on top of each other, wedged with smaller stones to make them balance as delicately as a house of cards. This prodigious task had been performed to line the route taken on the previous day by the Dalai Lama on a state visit to the Reting Monastery. Much emphasis is laid on the placing and balancing of stones. It is common to find big stacks of granite pebbles on each of which the "*Om mani padme hum*" formula has been neatly chipped—thousands of them in one stack. This assiduous use of stones seems to be one of the most widespread and persistent penetrations of Lamaism by the older Bon nature worship.

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About fifty miles out of Lhasa one road branches west to Shigatse and another goes north. This is the second highway to China across hundreds of miles of swamp and desert to Chinghai and thence to Lanchow. At this junction was the small semi-permanent camp of some herdsmen: two tents of black yak-wool each surrounded by a wall of adobe and dried yak-dung to make a wind-break 4 feet high. Other stacks of yak-dung were dotted among still more laid out to dry. Yak-dung collection is part of the *ula* labour service that herdsmen must perform without pay. With the unfailing courtesy of all Tibetans, they invited me into their tents.

The tent walls were about 4 feet high and a second wall of clay had been built inside, leaving an opening at one end. The clay had been modelled to make niches all round the oval tent, one serving as the inevitable shrine, with an image and one or two cheap offertory bowls. The nomad family's few possessions occupied the other niches. In the middle of the tent was a clay stove burning yak-dung and radiating a gentle heat. Tea was bubbling in a pot on one side and in another pot sand was being heated for parching barley. Two very important items of Tibetan furniture stood in a corner: butter churn and tea-mixer. They are of the same design; a deep wooden cylinder open at the top containing a round plunger pierced like a potato-masher, which is pumped up and down. A big one for churning milk and a smaller one for tea are in every herdsman's tent. People who go on journeys often strap a tea churn on their backs.

Our housewife, who was married to three brothers, soon poured the hot tea into the churn, added some salt and a pinch of soda, slipped a hunk of rancid butter down and churned the whole into that delicious, creamy soup which is indispensable in Tibet. Everyone brought out his personal bowl—carried by all low-class Tibetans in the pocket formed by pouching the gown over the belt—where a bowl, snuff-box, portable shrines and other things all accumulate next to the skin. We had tea and *tsamba* and afterwards cigarettes, which I never found a Tibetan layman to refuse. Much as I like buttered tea, I never got to like *tsamba*. It tastes like uncooked dough that has been mixed with diluted stale beer instead of water.

Poor as were the possessions of these lonely herds-folk, they could only be got at considerable cost. Communications have always been so bad and slow that prices of town-made goods are out of all proportion to their value. Goods only get to the grasslands by travelling merchants each with a monopoly in his district. In many parts of

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Tibet mountain tracks are so narrow and precipitous that two horses cannot pass. The only way to get through then is to change the loads from one horse to another, and after agreeing the values of the two animals the difference is made good in cash. In this treeless district, three crude wooden bowls are exchanged for one full-grown sheep. Only the price of tea had come down since the road reached Lhasa, and that was down by about one-third.

It takes five years to make a tent such as that we were sitting in, with its wide slit in the top through which the smoke escaped. Men, women and children in the grasslands, when they are not spinning prayer wheels, are spinning yarn from the belly hair of yaks. Watching them spin their prayer wheels, I used to wonder why they did not use the prayer canister as the spinner for the yarn and thus double the output of prayers and yarn. I never asked this question, since it seemed likely to be discourteous to this extremely courteous and friendly people.

Not far away from this road junction the snow mountains began, but the afternoon sun was scorching. I took a bathe in a glacial river—clear, green water that struck cold to the bone like an electric shock. It was impossible to do more than duck in and out again, shivering. One of the herdsmen's little girls was running about without a stitch of clothes and burned almost black. But it took only moments when the sun dipped behind the white peak of Chomo Gangar Mountain for the icy breath of the mountains to come down and send me to the warmth of a sleeping bag. Hostels had not yet been built on this stretch of road.

The projected railway to Lhasa will come over these grasslands in a few years' time, and this junction, with its two families of nomads, will probably become a busy town.

A few lorries had already passed, but not enough to cloy the appetites of the scattered herdsmen and monks. They came running from far away to see the new marvel. Occasional deer, wolves and foxes were almost as inquisitive, running up to a safe distance and standing with a foot poised to watch our progress. For considerable distances on the upland plains there had been no need to build a road at all, and we steered the jeep between surveyor's marks or two lines of boulders that marked the course. Machines would later bulldoze and metal the road, but that was not an urgent matter—if one track wore out a new one could easily be made until the more difficult sections were finished.

Shuge La is the highest pass on the entire road at 17,320 feet. But the

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approach to it is smooth and the gradient easy without any of the terrifying hairpins of Chu La. At the top of the pass Sadu Rinchen's wife, who was keeping her husband company on his first visit to Shigatse, threw some stones on the big pile which represented the offerings of centuries of devout travellers on foot and horseback. Oxygen bottles were standing ready, but nobody needed them, and I found myself so accustomed by now to heights that I felt no discomfort.

Far above us hung the pyramid of Chomo Gangar, one of the world's greatest peaks, 25,600 feet high, blinding with the whiteness of perpetual snow whose tresses flowing from the tip gave the only sign of a hurricane that must have been raging about it up there in the sunshine.

Away from Lhasa and its concentration of aristocracy and officialdom, glossy silks give way to utilitarian gowns. But as the gowns get simpler the women's headdress gets more complicated. A round mat of turquoise and coral beads is perched saucily on the front of the head, matched on each side by hanging strings of bigger beads. The hair is plaited into dozens of braids like whipcord and used to suspend a strip of hand-loomed cloth about 1 foot wide which hangs behind from the shoulders to the feet. On this are stitched silver dollars and copper coins, cowrie shells and other odds and ends of valuables—the whole family fortune being worn in this way. Young and beautiful women had their headdresses packed with trinkets while the aged, now relegated to the menial work of squirting *tsamba* gruel into the mouths of yak-calves from their own toothless mouths, had nothing left but a few small cowrie shells.

This is the region of Tibet mostly written about and from which the whole of Tibet has gained the reputation of being bleak and poor. Few foreigners ever travelled east of Lhasa and so they saw only this sort of country: high grasslands with smooth, treeless mountains rising from wide grass plains that extend and re-extend. But stunted yaks and stunted herbiage contrast with its big, jovial people, burned brown-violet by unimpeded sunshine.

A new ferry carries the road traffic across the Yalutsangpo (upper reaches of the Brahmaputra) about fifty miles east of Shigatse. Finishing touches were being put to this cable ferry, but when I arrived there on October 6 it was still uncertain whether it could be opened on that day. Everything was in a bustle at the riverside with a line of lorries waiting to cross, carrying Bailey bridges to span the Nyang

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River and complete the link with Shigatse. Interested monks from the nearby monastery sat in chattering rows and boy monks dared each other to press the electric horns. In a few hours the new ferry-boat was announced ready for service by triumphant Szechuan workers who had finished their work more than a week ahead of schedule. My jeep rolled off the ramps on to the south bank of the river—the first vehicle ever to cross the Yalutsangpo—and into a region where nothing on wheels had ever been seen before. Several hundred people were waiting on the opposite bank to celebrate the historic occasion. We drove through two ranks of men and women in their best clothes to a place where tables were set in the middle of a fair-sized village named Dartuga. Now we were in Tsang area, under the Panchen Lama, and the headdresses of the women were entirely different. Pride of their dress is a bow-like frame studded with turquoise and suspended in position by tiny plaits. It must need great care to get into equilibrium. Everyone crowded round and hung *hatas* on our jeeps.

A party was soon in session, with great jugs of sparkling *chang* circulating and biscuits and sweets being handed round. Local girls in their halo headdresses and men of all ages performed a dance that had last been seen when the Panchen Lama passed through in his palanquin.

Leaving the lorries far behind we set off over the still unfinished road, often running on the desert to avoid disturbing roadworkers who were hurrying to complete their work in the two weeks left till deadline. Then the road would still be in its primary stage but good enough to bring up machines and bridges to improve it.

From the ferry the first twenty-five miles into the Yalutsangpo Valley is near-desert, uninhabited. Blown sand covers the valley bottom and creeps up the mountains almost to their tips, leaving only bare rocks and crags too steep for the sand to cling to. Only most terrible winds could have carried the sand into these mountain valleys, almost levelling them out. We turned a spur of rock that reaches to the river, round which the road is carried on a ledge blasted out of rock. When this obstacle is behind there is suddenly no more sand, but rich farmland and villages.

At each village local officials seemed to have some miraculous means of knowing we would arrive on that day. Some of the holier monks are said to be able to transmit a visible personality to places far apart in a matter of seconds. In the absence of telephones and telegraphs, it almost appeared that some of them had been putting their talents to

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work. By whatever means they knew, they stood there bravely in the middle of the road with flagons of *chang* holding several gallons and dishes of cakes made of barley fried in butter. We exchanged *hatas* offering in return for theirs the ones received at the previous point. *Hatas* circulate; they are not gifts. There is some wear and tear, but the number of replacements needed yearly in Tibet could probably be worked out by an actuary. Villagers stood much further back than the officials and monks, hands to mouths, most of the younger women poised for immediate flight. But boys rushed forward and tried the steering wheel, kicked the tyres and pressed the hooter, which caused a general scurry and screams of mirth. It was the first time they had ever seen anything on wheels, but these boys were already daring each other to be "last across" and trying to cling on behind the jeeps as we moved off.

In its different way the approach to Shigatse is as dramatic as the run into Lhasa. We were driving due west and the sun reached the horizon as an enormous ball, brought close by the evening dust-storm. Straining into its red glare and the blinding dust, I could see only a few feet ahead. On each side the mountains were lit with purple, grey, red and blue pastel colours, while behind the floating dust turned the valley into night. Passing through this strange mixture of light, we reached a large village, and suddenly there was the Nyang River and our jeeps could not cross. Boatmen were there with yak-skin boats to ferry us over; the last time they were to ply on this ferry, for next day the P.L.A. had thrown bridges over and lorries were crossing. A half-mile walk brought us to Shigatse, home of Tibet's other Grand Lama.

Now that the road is finished, it takes only one day to drive from Lhasa to Shigatse instead of about a week by horse. Shigatse has been put on the main route from India to Lhasa and Peking. Before the road was built, it was three days ride from the old caravan route.

Tsang is an area where the influences of the Panchen Lama group, the Dalai Lama group (both of the Yellow Sect) and the Sagya (Coloured) Sect dovetail, with those of the Panchen Lama predominant. There are about 200,000 people in Tsang, and of these 100,000 are under the control of the Panchen Lama group.

The powers of the Panchen are exercised through the Panchen Khenpo Conference Committee—the equivalent in this region to the Kashag in the Dalai Lama's area. But the Dalai also has considerable interests in Tsang and these are looked after by his *dzongpons*.

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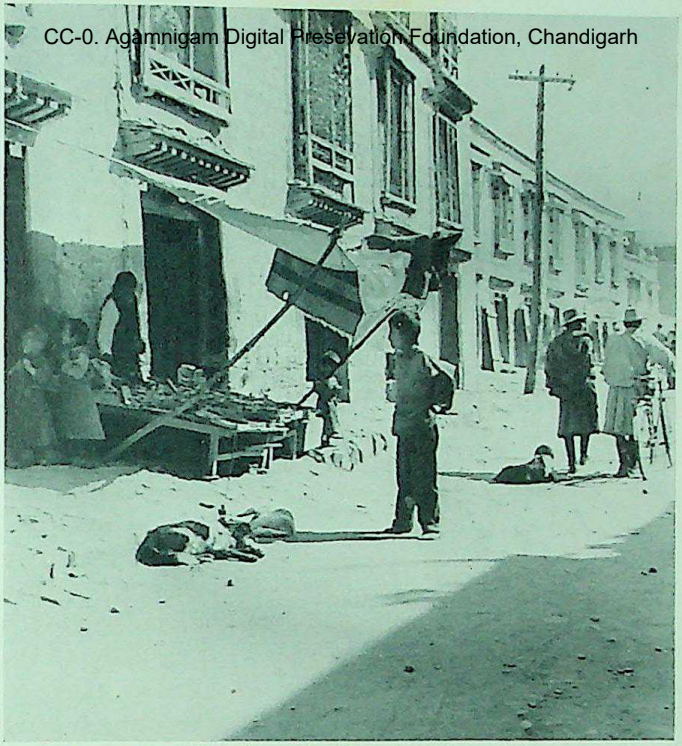
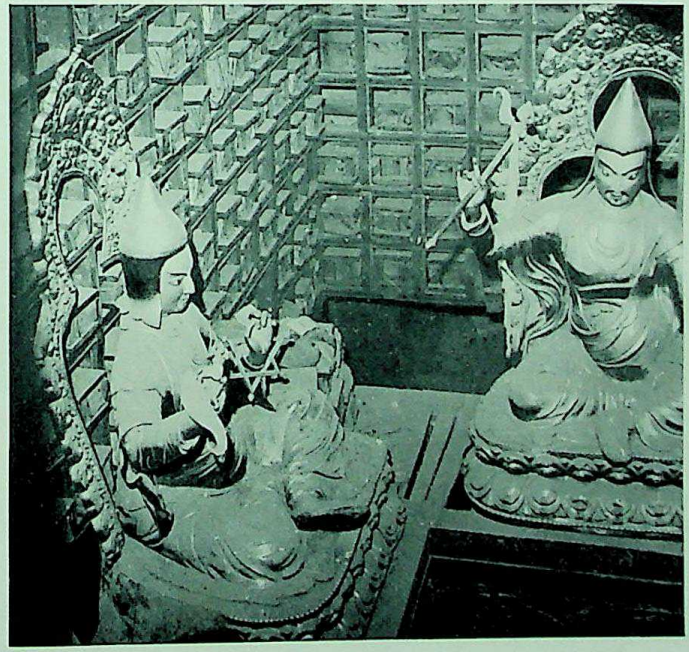


Lhasa's main shopping street

Inside Potala Palace, golden images and priceless Buddhist scriptures



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Shigatze at break of dawn

State Museum,
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LUCKNOW.

In Shigatse the Dalai Lama's *dzongpon* lives in the ancient fort which is said to have been the Potala's inspiration. When we arrived under the mass of this enormous fort night had fallen and there was just time to present *hatas* to the Chief of the Khenpo Committee and the *dzongpon* before taking a first-class and most welcome meal of mutton and barley beer at the new Shigatse Restaurant.

Early next morning the leaders of the Shigatse associations of women and youth called to see if they could be of any help. They were three beautiful young women and four tall and handsome young men, all obviously of the nobility and all full of high spirits over the work they are doing. The Youth Association, since it was established in 1953, has staged the first modern play written and produced by Tibetans. It was based on eyewitness accounts of the Younghusband expedition collected by members of the association and written by a youth called Chapei.

The Women's Association has sent out people to be schoolteachers in various parts of Tsang. Practically all members of these associations, as of similar ones in Lhasa, are nobles, monks, merchants or their wives. These are the only literate people. The development of any forms of organisation on a wider basis are hedged by the antique social system, because the relation between master and worker is that between overlord and serf. Lamaism and the Tibetan social system state in most definite religious terms: "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate." Lamaism is based on this concept, carried through infinite rebirths. A serf would be as horrified at the notion of sitting down at the same table and discussing with his lord or with a monk as an English peasant would have been 1,000 years ago. If anyone suggested his taking any action without his master's knowledge and consent, he would regard it as heresy. So that the fact that in these associations there are a few commoners who now sit in discussion with the nobility is remarkable. Dzeyang, Vice-President of the Women's Association, who told us about its work, had waved hair done into a loose bun on the back of her neck and into twin bangs over the forehead. She used make-up and succeeded in looking extremely modern and *soignée* in her Tibetan robes.

These organisations of the women and youth helped to distribute some of the £200,000 in interest-free loans provided by the People's Bank in Tsang district during the past four years. This sum does not include a further £115,000 spent in flood relief.

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A stroll through Shigatse, sand-coloured like the soil on which it stands except for the great red and white pile of the Tashilunpo Monastery, took me to the offices of the Khenpo Committee. This committee was formed by a meeting of all clerical and lay officials in Tsang. It is not appointed by the Panchen, but his approval must be had for all its decisions before they are forwarded to the State Council in Peking. The courtyard was filled with brightly caparisoned horses held by red-hatted grooms, and upstairs in the Committee's chambers I sat among rustling gold silk and claret cashmere of the lay and clerical advisers of the Panchen Lama while the Committee leader, Dji Jigme Dzaza, gave a report on developments since the Panchen Lama returned to his seat at Shigatse. For thirty years the seat had been vacant, from the time the Ninth Panchen fled to Chinghai and died there, until the new Panchen returned after the 1951 agreement.

Shigatse, I was told, had a new hospital, veterinary station, agricultural experimental station, a Tibetan language newspaper every two days and some of the fifteen primary schools that had been opened in Tsang. Did I want to visit any of these? Giving facts and figures, Dji Jigme said that the numbers of peddlers had doubled in four years because government loans had increased production by handicraftsmen.

One of the prides of Shigatse is Tibet's first municipal housing estate. It was built in 1954 with funds provided by Peking, and gives rent-free accommodation to fifty formerly homeless families—and in Tibet homeless really means homeless. All these families were either working for wages or in handicrafts as a result of getting government loans.

One of them, Bangsan Tseren, a carpet-maker with three skilled daughters, had been in a hopeless state—penniless and in debt. "We had long arms, but short sleeves," he said. This common Tibetan expression means "skill but no capital." Bangsan had been scrounging around doing unskilled work and living in a hovel roofed over with any scraps he could find. He heard of the new government loans—interest-free to peasants and at 1 per cent. without security to craftsmen—and put in for a loan to buy wool.

"I used to be able to borrow very little at 5 per cent. a month, and every loan got me further into debt," he explained. "This time I got 200 silver dollars of the new loan and bought wool. We all went to work, sold the rugs and repaid the loan. I took out another loan, and since then I've been working all the time and I'm almost out of debt. Then I applied for one of these new houses and got it. I never expected

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anything like this." He had a new felt hat which he held against his right breast as he spoke, constantly bowing and sticking out his tongue while making a sucking noise inwards, a sign of great respect. There were two or three thick ottomans on the floor with rugs on them. On the wall were pictures of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh.

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Chapter Sixteen

MAXIMS *V.* MATCHLOCKS

The Good-natured Thunderbolt—Disaster strikes Pleasant Valley—A flood builds a road—Gyantse Fort—Death at Hot Springs—Stones against high explosive—British graveyard in the clouds—Shigatse waits our return

LOSAN DORJE—his name means "Good-natured Thunderbolt" —met me without servility. He was polite, calm and self-assured. Unlike commoners I had met before, he did not bob and bow, show the palms of his hands or make the sucking noise which indicates that an inferior is trying to avoid contaminating with his breath the air breathed by a superior. His boots were of tanned leather, ankle-length, and he wore puttees above them. (New and worn Indian Army gear is common on the Tibetan markets.) Dorje, the Thunderbolt, was one of the workers on the new section of road between Shigatse and Gyantse. His range of experience was wider than usual.

He had been one of the victims of the flood which devastated Pleasant Valley, between these two towns, on July 17, 1954. A natural dam in the mountains collapsed when an avalanche suddenly slid into a lake above the Nyang River. A wall of water 25 feet high swept through the valley, drowning 700 people, destroying the crops on 10,000 acres of land, and affecting the lives and homes of 15,000 people—almost everyone in the valley. Gyantse and Shigatse folk thought it was the end. So late in the year they could not get new crops into the ground even if they had the seed. Tibet, with its low level of production and narrow margin of existence, could no more cope with such a tragedy than any ancient society whose ruined towns dot the world as a result of similar disasters.

Dorje, who had been a soldier in the Tibetan army, said that he finished his service and settled on the land—presumably as a *duichun*, or masterless peasant. I could not ask him if he ran away from the army or how he became masterless. In Tibet you simply do not ask such questions. It is tacitly accepted that all *duichuns* must have broken connections with their own feudal lord, usually as a result of debts piling up, and therefore the overlord has a right to claim his return if he is found. But Tibetan society would come to a standstill if everyone had to be returned to their original estates. What is lost on the swings

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is picked up on the roundabouts. Practically every acre of land and every head of cattle belongs to the monasteries, nobility and local governments. By running away, the serf liquidates the debt, but masterless people in general have to go and work for someone else. Relations between *duichun* and their new masters vary. They are loose at first, but as the generations pass they become less distinguishable from the relations of ordinary serfs in their tenure of the land.

In whatever relationship, Losan Dorje was working on the land when the flood swept down in 1954 and wiped out his crops and home, almost killing his wife and child. They were hungry, homeless and penniless. Tibet has no tradition of helping others for social reasons. To give to a beggar and to save a condemned yak from being suffocated for meat are meritorious—for oneself. Such sufferings as those of the flood victims would be seen as the result of former lack of devoutness, sins in previous lives. But when the flood occurred—Dorje's eyes got very round as he described what happened—the Kashag, Khenpo Committee and Chinese Communist Party were immediately on the spot and taking responsibility.

"They gave me, free, 30 lb. of barley, 12 feet of cloth, a pair of boots, a pair of rubber shoes, a quilt and a shirt. I am a Shigatse man. I was told that if I liked to work on building the new housing estate I could have one of the houses. They paid 90 cents a day." This compared with an average 50 cents a day for building workers, but actually much building work is done without payment, the peasants being merely instructed to do the work.

When the urgent relief work had been done, the State Council in Peking granted £115,000 (800,000 Chinese *yuan*) for long-term relief, with the suggestion that it ought to be spent as wages to help construction plans and in such a way as to make sure that every acre of flooded land came under crops again in the following year.

These were the terms of reference when the Khenpo Committee, Kashag and Tibetan Working Committee of the Chinese Communist Party planned how to spend the money. They decided that most of the grant would be spent on wages for building a new highway between Gyantse and Shigatse. This would enable the flood victims to survive the winter and use part of their wages to buy seeds for planting in the following year.

Losan Dorje had finished work on the municipal housing estate and was working on the new People's Hospital when he heard that flood victims were being urged to work on the new road. He heard

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a rumour that flood victims would be chosen first for the work and very high piece rates would be paid.

"Other people said the pay was low and the work was hard. But I had been treated better than a kinsman after the flood, so I applied for roadwork. Later plenty of people wanted to start, but only those with flood losses were accepted," Dorje said. "A good worker could earn 6½ silver dollars a day. I worked very hard and earned 7½ dollars a day, and my wife earned 5 to 5½ dollars" (6½ dollars is worth about £1 10s. and would be a good wage for two weeks work in Tibet).

Wages were paid 80 per cent. in grain and 20 per cent. in cash, in order not to force up grain prices. Rice and barley given for wages were calculated at slightly below current market prices, so that the road-workers could recover their full wages or more by selling. All road work was done in off-seasons for farm work and a basic rate was paid to road-workers who were laid off during rain. Medical treatment by the P.L.A. was free. Each camp of fifty road-workers had a piecework norm of 500 paces in ten days and any team which finished earlier was also paid extra for helping other teams. Each team elected three model workers, among them the Thunderbolt. Later he was elected as a model bridge-builder.

Without immodesty, he said: "I was very hard-working. They said we should begin work at sunrise and finish before sunset, with three rests. But I began before dawn and finished when it was dark, with only two rests. I tried to find quicker ways of doing things."

"Why did you work so hard?" I asked.

He thought carefully about this, and when his answer came it was formulated exactly.

"First," Dorje said, tapping his thumb, "I work for my living and I am used to hard work; second, the harder I work the more pay I get, and I don't have to worry about next winter; third, the quicker the highway is finished, the quicker lorries can come here and bring goods, and the prices will go down."

"Now the road is nearly finished," I said. "What will you do next. Will you go back to farming?" He took the cigarette I offered, touching the elbow of his right arm with the fingers of his left hand as he did so. This common gesture of courtesy in the East indicates that the receiver of a gift will not use the left hand to strike.

"I won't go back to the land," he replied, tapping the cigarette on a gnarled thumbnail. "The P.L.A. has taught me to be a stone-mason and I hope to get work at that. But it is difficult. The older

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stonemasons have a guild and I can't join it. Perhaps there will be enough work for everyone now. Anyway, this winter I have nothing to worry about and I still have ten more weeks' work on the road."

How did he get along with the Hans? I asked.

Mostly the P.L.A. were very good, he said. They never asked others to do what they would not do themselves. "Of course, you get one now and then who likes to throw his weight about. But very few. They lend a hand if you get a difficult stone and if you look sick they send you off to the medical station at once. I got 1½ dollars a day for a week when I was ill. They try to learn Tibetan, and when they talk to us they advise all Tibetans to be united and work to improve Tibet."

All the time we talked he had kept on his hat, a wide-brimmed Gurkha model resting on a mop of long uncombed hair. He wore a 2-inch circle of "gold" through his left ear faced with a piece of imitation turquoise. His face was sensitive and thoughtful.

The local bureau said that, although some bridges had not been built yet, it was low-water season and a jeep could make it to Gyantse. On October 10 my jeep was making the first wheel tracks on the virgin surface of Thunderbolt's new road. This was the only section of the road entirely built by Tibetans and the road-bed was better than the primary standard set for the whole road.

It was one year after the flood catastrophe, but there was the road; there were the crops; there were the rebuilt houses and people were somewhat better dressed than in other parts. Pleasant Valley was again living up to its name. The only signs of the flood were the new road and the irrigation canals that had been built with relief money from Peking. Every square inch of arable land was under barley, wheat, oats, and beans, for the harvest is late here. This valley contains some of the richest farmland in Tibet, but even here an average ear of barley only carried five or six grains. In some places in Tibet the seed is no more than trebled in a good year.

My jeep was first over the new highway and unannounced. Peasants in undyed homespun came rushing across the fields to see what this could be. Terrified yaks went hurtling as far in the opposite direction before they turned their silly white faces and stopped to look. Men, women and children came running from cottages in various stages of undress and went running back again screaming. Cattle and donkeys tore along the road ahead of the jeep without the least idea that the thing to do was leave the road. They ran until quite exhausted and stood trembling, waiting for the end.

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The whole fifty-seven miles from Shigatse to Gyantse is along level valley bottoms at about 13,000 feet above sea-level. In spite of a delay when the jeep stuck for twenty minutes in a deceptively deep ford, it only took two and a half hours to cover the distance.

Gyantse stands in a wide rich plain where trade routes from India, Ladakh, Bhutan, Nepal, Shigatse, Lhasa, Mongolia, Siberia and eastern China all meet. It stands on one of the oldest trade routes in human history. This lush, mountain-bounded plain is full of villages built among groves of willow and poplar.

The fortress at Gyantse stands on an almost sheer outcrop of rock, rising to 500 or 600 feet above the plain in a superb position to dominate it and protect the monastery and market town below. This fort is said to be at least 1,000 years old, and built when Gyantse was capital of a small kingdom. It was here that British forces had been brought to a halt in 1904 and held for three months, despite having previously wiped out the flower of the Tibetan army in a curious incident at Guru.

This incident aroused strong feelings in Britain at the time. *The Times* correspondent wrote:[1] "It was reported and believed in Lhasa that the English had decoyed the Tibetan soldiers away from their defences and had then wantonly shot them down."

"Younghusband was congratulated by the Viceroy, knighted by the King-Emperor and grilled in the House of Commons for what was labelled a 'massacre'," wrote Lowell Thomas, Jr.

In Gyantse the name of Younghusband is poison, and each year a special ceremony is held dedicated to the occasion when the images in the temple were slashed by the swords of his men.

Reports written at the time were all by war correspondents attached to Younghusband's forces and by members of his forces. They made no attempt to hide their bias, but their reports contained variations. No British correspondent had visited Tibet since then, and one reason for my anxiety to get to Gyantse was to make an independent check. I had already met, in Lhasa, the grandson of the general who led the Tibetan forces and I wanted to get some information closer to the scene.

Younghusband spent the first months of 1904 acclimatising his force in the Himalayas, and at the end of March ordered an advance. At Guru they met the main forces of the Tibetans behind a wall they had built to block the way. Parleys began. The Tibetan forces were

1 Perceval Landon, *Lhasa.*

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commanded by a general from Lhasa and one from Shigatse, and a general from Yatung was also present. Macdonald and Younghusband met the Tibetan generals, who urged the British to return to Yatung and negotiate there.

Up to this point the reports of what took place are in accord.

British correspondents reported that Younghusband refused to retire, and said that if the Tibetan troops continued to block the road he would order General Macdonald to remove them. The Tibetan officers thereupon returned for consultations behind the wall. Macdonald meantime ordered British forces to outflank and surround the Tibetans. As the British approached the wall, the Tibetan officers rode out again to talk and said that their men were under orders not to fire.

Lieut.-Colonel Waddell of the Medical Service described what happened next in these words:[1] "As several of the Tibetans were seen fingering their loaded matchlocks menacingly, General Macdonald deemed it necessary for the safety of the Mission to disarm them, and passed an order to that effect, and the reinforcements of more sepoys which he ordered up marched to the wall with fixed bayonets and commenced disarming the Tibetans inside. . . . Just as I got there, I heard a shot fired, and, looking up, saw the infuriated Lhasa *Depon* [General—A.W.] and some of his men scuffling with some Sikh sepoys on our side of the wall about 15 yards off."

Waddell said that the Lhasa general went up to a Sikh who had taken a musket from a Tibetan, pulled it out of the Sikh's hands and shot away his jaw with a pistol. On seeing this, Waddell stated, the Tibetans fired their muskets and rushed out with their swords drawn.

"The suddenness of this attack at such close quarters was startling; but within a few seconds our sepoys began to retaliate on their assailants. Under cover of the wall, they poured a withering fire into the enemy which, with the quick-firing Maxims, mowed down the Tibetans in a few minutes with terrific slaughter. Those who had rushed out were soon all killed; and the remainder were so huddled together that they could neither use their swords nor guns. . . . It was all over in about ten minutes, but in that time the flower of the Lhasa army had perished." Waddell notes that the Lhasa and Shigatse generals were both killed and the general from Yatung wounded. "Altogether the Tibetans lost about 300 killed, 200 wounded, and

[1] *Lhasa and Its Mysteries.*

200 prisoners. Our losses were only thirteen wounded, as our people were protected by the wall."

"It was like a man fighting with a child," wrote Perceval Landon describing the same scene. "It was an awful sight. One watched it with the curious sense of fascination which the display of unchecked power over life and death always exerts when exercised. Men dropped at every yard. Here and there an ugly heap of dead and wounded was concentrated, but not a space of 20 yards was without its stricken and shapeless burden. At last, the slowly moving wretches—and the slowness of their escape was horrible and loathsome to us—reached the corner, where at any rate we knew them safe from the horrible lightning storm which they themselves challenged."

Waddell contradicted his civilian colleague on this. He said bluntly that the fleeing Tibetans "were pursued remorselessly by our mounted infantry, and their bodies strewed the roadside for several miles".

This destruction of the ill-armed Tibetans by no means got the welcome in London its architects hoped. "Perhaps no British victory has been greeted with less enthusiasm than the action at Hot Springs [Guru—A.W.]", wrote the *Daily Mail* correspondent, Edmund Candler, rushing to the defence of the army. He explained:[1] "In the light of after-events it is clear that we could have made no progress without inflicting terrible punishment. The slaughter at Guru only forestalled the inevitable. We were drawn into the vortex of war by the Tibetans' own folly. There was no hope of their regarding the British as a formidable Power, and a force to be reckoned with, until we had killed several thousand of their men." Candler puts his views—admittedly so unattractive to the British public—with startling frankness: "Most of us thought that we could only reach the capital through the most awful carnage. We pictured the 40,000 monks of Lhasa hurling themselves defiantly on our camp. We saw them mown down by Maxims, lanes of dead. A hopeless struggle, and an ugly page in military history. Still, we must go on; there was no help for it."

So the British were able to advance to Gyantse. But they did not leave it till three months later, owing to the resistance put up by the Tibetans with ancient cannon and gas-pipe rifles using home-made black powder.

I climbed to the top of the castle, whose walls are as they were then, shattered and riven by British 10-pounders. With me went Sonam Bandzu, now a sixty-four-year-old man, but then a lad of thirteen,

[1] Candler, *op. cit.*

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a servant of Djibu, the wounded Yatung general who escaped with his life from the Guru incident, as Waddell reported. At the top of the fort, looking across at the little park in which the British had their headquarters, we were in the positions from which the Tibetans matched their stone-loaded cannon against modern explosive shells.

"My father was batman to Djibu and saw everything that happened at Guru in the Wood-Dragon year [1904]. The British could not break through, so they sent a force to outflank us. We sent about 1,000 men to protect our rear, leaving about 1,500 facing the British behind the wall. Younghusband and another officer suggested negotiations. They were very cunning. They said that we ought to put out the fuses on our matchlocks. They said; 'Let us talk without fear of each other. You see, we have no matches burning, but you have. During negotiations we should be equal.' So our men were ordered to put out the fuses. When the British officers came under a truce flag to talk, they pulled out pistols and killed our generals. Our soldiers were killed by weapons such as we had never seen before. My master was wounded, but he was the only high officer to escape with his life."

In Lhasa I had heard the same report from the grandson of the Lhasa General Namseling. His grandfather had hastily organised the Tibetan army on the orders of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. They were untrained monks and laymen armed with slings, cutlasses, spears and muzzle-loading matchlocks. Even of those antique firearms they had very few. Seventeen members of Namseling's family died in the incident.

Those were the two versions of what happened at Guru, British and Tibetan.

Nobody seems to dispute the bravery of the Tibetans. After the Guru incident the remnant Tibetan forces, without generals, rallied to defend Kangma, on the way to Gyantse. Candler described[1] this action.

"They rushed to the bottom of the wall", he wrote, "tore out stones, and flung them up at our sepoys; they leapt up to seize the muzzles of our rifles, and scrambled to gain a foothold and lift themselves on to the parapet; they fell bullet-pierced, and some turned savagely on the wall again. It was only a question of time, of minutes, and the cool, mechanical fire of the 23rd Pioneers would have dropped every man. One hundred and six bodies were left under the wall, and sixty more were killed in the pursuit. Never was there such a hopeless, helpless

[1] Candler, *op. cit.*

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struggle, such desperate and ineffectual gallantry." But Candler, using the then fashionable "Darwinist" argument for conquering less industrialised countries, argued: "They must come into line; it is the will of the most evolved"—the British—"lord of all these by virtue of his race, the most evolved. . . ."

From where I sat on the roof of the fort I could see the little graveyard where some British officers killed in the fighting had lain for fifty years, thousands of miles from their homes, so that Tibet could have "Free Trade". Younghusband's force succeeded in its objective of getting a trade treaty signed, giving Britain privileges in Tibet, but now the only British thing left in Gyantse is that tiny graveyard.

By the time I got down from the fort and had eaten, there was still an hour or two left to visit the Palkhor, one of Tibet's most famous temples, where monks pointed out to me sword marks on the image of the Buddha in the Chapel of Jo Rimpoche. They said these were made by British troops who had looted the place. I found a reference to this in Candler's book, *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, in which the writer said that when carpets and images "adorned Simla and Darjeeling drawing-rooms, unkind people began to say that British officers had wantonly looted Palkhor Choide, one of the most famous monasteries in Tibet".

I returned to Shigatse that evening, doing the round trip in a day, with eight hours in Gyantse. It would have taken a week by horse. News of the jeeps' passing had spread far, and along the road there were groups of people who had been picnicking all day in the hope of seeing us return. Little boys risked darting across the road ahead of the jeeps, but adults stood wondering. Sometimes they returned our waves incredulously, as though surprised to find that the cars contained ordinary mortals.

It was dark when we reached Shigatse, but in the light of the headlamps I could see that the roads into the town were lined with people who had heard that we had intended to go to Gyantse and back in a single day. They stood there in the dark, spinning prayer-wheels and watching this miracle.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LUNCH WITH THE BOUNDLESS LIGHT

Seven-storey Buddha—Bedroom of the Grand Lama—Cause of dissension —Agreement honoured—Mao Tse-tung's influence—The Panchen and chopsticks—Tibet's highways a "miracle"

A GREATER sense of wealth and pomp pervades the Tashilunpo Monastery, winter home of the Panchen Lama, than any single monastery in Lhasa. The biggest pieces of turquoise I ever saw are let in as floor slabs before some of the altars. It is claimed that the tomb of the Eighth Panchen Lama is covered with the most beautiful decorations in the world. Beautiful or not, it is a priceless pile of gold, silver, precious stones and rare trinkets rising higher than 30 feet. In this chapel there is also a piece of granite in which a small depression is said to be the miraculously imposed footprint of the Ninth Panchen as a baby.

In a nearby chapel—in fact, rising through seven chapels on top of each other—is a gilt-bronze statue 130 feet high of Buddha himself—one of the sculptural wonders of the world. When I entered the lowest of the levels that houses this enormous image, biggest in Tibet, and looked up to where the peaceful left hand rested on the lap far above, and still higher to the gleaming right hand with its fingers raised in blessing, and still higher, in the direct light of windows seven floors above to the sublime, unreal face smiling benevolently into the distance, I could not hold back a gasp of amazement and delight. Seven galleries run round the Buddha at varying heights, reached by almost perpendicular ladders with shaking handrails and sloping treads glistening with spilt butter. At each level butter lamps burn, and just over the last gallery containing the top half of the Buddha's head are some of the golden roofs that challenge the Potala's in size and number. This Buddha was created by order of the Ninth Panchen before he fled from Tibet.

Perhaps no foreigner ever before saw the private living quarters of the Panchen in this great rambling monastery. All his rooms are like chapels: the same images in glass-fronted cases and religious drawings, paintings and books. In the Panchen's living-room a long case contained thousands of tiny images in bronze, and nearby a clock by an English

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maker and a French clock under glass with tiny clockwork birds twittering in the boughs of miniature trees.

A travel-worn pilgrim was going round touching with his own forehead every place that might have been touched by the Panchen Lama.

In the Panchen's austere bedroom, lined on one side with glass and on the other with images, there is no privacy for the lonely young God-King, who is really never alone. Above his narrow, hard bunk of polished wood, among the other religious drawings, were Passion Buddhas in sexual embrace. Living Buddhas are above such earthly temptations. The telephone on a table beside the narrow, hard bunk was the only thing that represented the twentieth century in this carpeted cell.

As far as I know, a foreigner never before had the opportunity I had to be received in audience by both the Living-Gods in Tibet. After the British invasion, relations between the two groups were estranged because the Panchen group always opposed the Thirteenth Body's policy of trying to manœuvre with the British. When open rupture took place in 1923, Tibet found itself without a Panchen Lama. This was a grave matter, because Tibetan Lamaism is almost inconceivable without the "Father and Son" relationship between the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, reincarnates of two aspects of Tibet's guardian god. Their reunion after the 1951 agreement was "a cause for joy among Buddhists everywhere," the Dalai Lama said to me.

The usual summer palace of the Panchen Lama was not in use in 1955 because of flood damage in the previous year. Labour had been concentrated on rehousing and road-work. A half-mile drive out of Shigatse took me to where he was staying at Dechan Phodang, an ancient building put up in the time of the Second Dalai Lama. As I got out of my jeep, the Panchen Lama's official photographer came up in his Mongolian style jacket and hat of gold cloth with an assortment of the most up-to-date cameras dangling round him. He is brother of the Dalai Lama's official photographer and speaks both English and Han. I could scarcely recognise him as the young, plainly clothed man I had been chatting with at a dance the previous night, downing glass after glass of Shigatse's rightly famous barley beer.

At the same dance had been Dji Jigme Dzaza, Chairman of the Panchen's Government Committee, wearing an ordinary suit, a thing I saw done by no other Tibetan. He also had his hair short, which is most

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unusual for a layman. But now he met me in all the splendour of his gold robes and led the way in to the Panchen, for whom he was to interpret into Han. Actually the Panchen Lama was reared in Chinghai and speaks fluent Han, but it would be improper to require him to do so in an official interview.

Dji Jigme led the way past praying monks, up two flights of dark, head-bumping ladderways, through some ante-rooms, and there was the Panchen Lama, waiting to receive on his wrists my 6-foot scarf of white silk.

The Precious Grand Sage (*Panchen Rimpoche*), Boundless Light, reincarnation of Opame, is tall and calm with a long, sensitive face below cropped hair that is allowed to grow about 1 inch long. He wore the universal garnet-coloured woollen robe with its toga thrown over the left shoulder. His grip, like the Dalai Lama's, is powerful and not formal.

By coincidence, the two Grand Lamas are much of an age, the Dalai being twenty and the Panchen nineteen when I met them. Both are tall and personable, the Panchen being perhaps slightly taller. The Panchen Lama, whose sphere is considered to be spiritual affairs, actually does look more spiritual and withdrawn than the Dalai Lama, the temporal ruler, who appears more the man of the world.

The Panchen Lama led the way to his private sitting-room and sat at the head of a small table covered with sweets, fruits and glasses for tea. Dji Jigme stood on his left and the official photographer, now turned stenographer, sat on the floor crosslegged with his hard gold hat by his side, taking note in what appeared to be Tibetan shorthand of all the Panchen said. The room was older than the Dalai's reception-room and time had toned its once-gaudy red, gold, green and blue paint, faded its brocades and aged its carvings. In one corner was a narrow bunk like that in the monastery, also with a telephone by its side. His Serenity wore on his right wrist a gold wrist-watch of Swiss make over which his rosary was twined.

Buttered tea came round and we chatted—small talk about the journey, the roads, what we thought of Shigatse, the weather. Dji Jigme stood at the Panchen's side relaying what he said in impeccable Han. At first the Panchen's deep voice had a nervous hesitancy, which it lost as he talked, without any notes, on any subject that came up. He never loses a fleeting half-smile, as though of some deep, inward amusement that cannot be shared.

The questions I asked had the aim of steering the talk into the same

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channels as the previous talk with the Dalai Lama. I wanted to compare their views. Imperialists had penetrated China during the past century, he said. They had invaded Tibet and carried out a policy of "divide and rule". The Kuomintang and previous Chinese governments had undermined unity between the nationalities of China.

"As a result," the Panchen said, "there was dissension. The Tibetans were neither united with their brother nationalities in China nor among themselves. During the last few decades dissension among Tibetans grew more serious."

The Panchen Lama said that the Chinese People's Government ordered the Chinese army to march into Tibet "for the sake of the political integrity of China and to liberate the Tibetan people. At the same time it called on the local government of Tibet to send representatives to negotiate. I and my party returned to Tibet after the 1951 agreement."

"And since Your Serenity returned," I asked, "what has been happening in Tsang? How has the agreement been carried out?"

"I want to say definitely that during the past four years and more, all officers and men of the P.L.A. and other government personnel in Tibet have kept strictly to the agreement, and tremendous results have come from it." He shook his arm free from his toga and gently emphasised his points with long fingers. "They have respected religious freedom and Tibetan customs and have protected the temples; schools have been built. Now there are newspapers, post and telegraph offices, State trading companies, hospitals, banks and cinema shows. Loans to handicraftsmen, traders, peasants and herdsmen are helping them thrive, and unstinted help was given to peasants who suffered from frosts and the floods in the Nyang River area last year."

All traces of hesitation had gone from the Panchen's speech, and I was trebly engaged in trying to get down notes of what he was saying, observing how he was saying it and evading the pressing demands of officials to drink still more buttered tea. Under my left elbow the official photographer-stenographer was trying to keep pace with the Panchen's words.

"Last year, when I went to Peking," the Panchen went on, "definite decisions were reached, under the personal guidance of Chairman Mao, on the relations between Ü and Tsang—questions that had never been settled before. The speedy formation of a committee to prepare the way for a Tibetan Autonomous Region was also agreed.

"From all this," he said, "it is obvious that because the agreement

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LUCKNOW.

has been properly carried out in practice, Tibet has made great headway, politically, culturally and economically. Living standards for the people have improved and a solid foundation has been laid for their future happiness."

Both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama had been reincarnated in Chinghai Province, but the Dalai had gone to Lhasa as a child, whereas the Panchen has remained till 1951 in exile. The Panchen had toured China twice, once by himself and once with the Dalai Lama. We chatted about these trips.

"The Dalai Lama and I visited various cities and saw some of the great changes taking place. It was really beyond belief that there could have been such tremendous changes in so short a time. We saw new factories where there had been none; old factories that had been expanded; ruined factories that had been restored. In industry, especially heavy industry, there have been great advances in our country. No place was the same as before. It was as though a new world had come into being. This has given us greater confidence that we can build a new Tibet."

Next I asked His Serenity whether he was satisfied that the freedom of religious belief was being observed all over China.

"This matter—religious freedom—is one that comes within our duties and to which we have to pay close attention," he replied. "There could be no sharper contrast than the present religious freedom and the wanton religious persecution under the Kuomintang. I saw it for myself. Temples are now being well cared for and, to take a specific case, the Lingying Temple in Hangchow is now having large-scale repairs carried out. Religious freedom is entirely respected and there is complete freedom of religious practice. Last year we gave many talks on the Buddhist laws to Buddhists of both sexes and gave our blessing to many monks and lay believers. We and all the people of the land endorse with a single heart the religious policy of the New China."

The Panchen Lama spoke very warmly of his friendship with the Dalai Lama. I reminded him that in 1954 I had met both of them in Peking at a reception. I said, "I saw no sign then of any dissension. You appeared to be very good friends."

He smiled and said, "Of course. I have just told you the reasons why disunity between the Dalai Lama and myself was a historical fact, and one which played into the hands of the imperialists, who use the policy of divide and rule. These imperialistic tricks were only smashed after the founding of New China and the liberation of Tibet. Harmony

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between the Dalai Lama and myself was established then and becomes daily closer. There never was such internal unity in Tibet as there is today."

He thought for some moments before making the next statement: "Now if a nation is divided within itself, socialism could not be built, however willing people might be to build it. But with unity between the Dalai Lama and myself, the Tibetan people will certainly be able to build socialism and a happy new Tibet jointly with the other nationalities of our motherland. Unity between the Dalai Lama and myself has completely shattered the anti-religious conspiracies of the imperialists. Freedom of religion has been restored, and so the unity between the two of us is a significant success for Buddhism. This cannot be separated from the able leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung."

Putting the same question I had asked the Dalai Lama, I asked the Panchen's views on the relations between India and China. He replied that the five principles for peaceful coexistence outlined by Chou En-lai and Nehru had bound two great countries together in the cause of peace and had strengthened peace in Asia to an unheard-of extent. "A fine precedent has been set by China and India to settle all outstanding international disputes by negotiation."

I now found that I was invited to lunch with the Panchen Lama. This was an unexpected and astonishing honour indeed. We strolled out into one of the gorgeous ante-rooms, where a table was set in a mixture of Chinese and western styles. Heavy solid silver knives, forks and spoons with gilt reliefs were set beside long ivory chopsticks. In the middle of the table, among sauces, fruits and cakes, was a tin of State Express 555 cigarettes, though the Panchen himself is not allowed by his vows to smoke or drink. For toasts, which included friendship between the Tibetan and British people, and many others, we drank orange squash from India.

After toasting friendship with Britain, the Panchen Lama turned to me and said in Han: "There really were some incorrect reports in the past about Tibet and the Tibetan people. It is very important to us to have those reports corrected by facts. If you can help to correct some of those distortions I shall be very glad, because I am sure it will help to improve the relations between the Tibetan and British peoples."

He picked up a fork and indicated that we should begin the first hot course, which had just come in. It was a long meal of the costliest and rarest dishes—served in Chinese style, as most important Tibetan

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banquets have been ever since Princess Wen Chang stirred the cooking pot that still sits beside her image in the Potala. There were shark fins, soups made from the nests of the sea-swallows, sea cucumbers (*bêche-de-mer*), juicy bamboo shoots, jellified eggs, sweet and sour fish, shark's stomach and many sorts of meats and breads.

When I picked up my chopsticks, the Panchen already had his fork, and smilingly said that having been brought up to knives and forks he was very unskilled in using chopsticks. Then he took up his own chopsticks and very neatly picked up a cake and put it on my plate—a gesture from a host which is regarded as a great courtesy in the East. He chatted and ate almost nothing, and then only when pressed to try some new delicacy which appeared on the table. He would take a morsel and appear to eat it, but I cannot remember that he actually did so. There was such a whisking of soiled plates and replacements of new that it was difficult to follow, but it seemed that part of the remoteness of Living-Gods is preserved by their not appearing interested in ordinary things like eating. Most young people of his age would have found those delicious foods irresistible after a long session of talking.

At the table we chatted about many things: agriculture and its prospects in Tibet, mineral resources, foreign customs and, of course, food.

"I hope you will emphasise, in anything you write about Tibet," he said, "that this land and all its mountains and rivers are part of the People's Republic of China." As an example of the progress being made, he cited the two new roads: "The Sikang-Tibet and the Chinghai-Tibet highways were built last year across several thousand miles of plateau known as the 'roof of the world'. This is an event of such magnitude that it can only be regarded as a miracle."

The last few dishes came and then the soup and rice that indicate the end of a Chinese-style meal. He pointed to the cigarettes and said I could smoke if I wished, but he would not. I remarked that I had given it up. "So," he smiled back, "we belong to the same sect."

It was time to leave this charming well-informed young man to continue his life of abstinence and lonely Godship. Out in the sunshine he put a *hata* over my neck, we were photographed, shook hands and parted, presumably until such time as national affairs bring him to Peking to attend the National People's Congress or the State Council.

Next day I met Dji Jigme and some of the monks who had been present at my talk with the Panchen Lama. We were all in a pretty

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little park at the foot of the Tashilunpo Monastery at a party where eating, drinking and joviality were in true medieval proportions. Whoever else in Tibet may enjoy life, the Panchen, like the Dalai, must stay always remote and ascetic. They must preserve the relations of Gods to men. As the nobles and high monks of Shigatse were carousing, the Panchen Lama, not far away, remained in the dim chapels that are his only home, among the lynx-eyed monks who are his only companions, carrying out the complex ceremonies required of an eternally transmigrating Buddha, a God-King.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE POOR MAN AT HIS GATE

Who are the Tibetans?—Position of the serfs—Unpaid labour—Debt—
—The "black" people—Old Sonam's balance sheet—Village survey—
Free Loans—Growing new crops at 13,000 feet—Religion and insecticides
—Tibet can be rich—Mental upheaval

WRITERS have variously estimated Tibet's population as low as 800,000 and as high as 5,000,000. Juggling with Tibetan population figures can lead almost anywhere. In a single paragraph Lowell Thomas, Jr., wrote[1]: "Nearly one-fourth of the males become monks"; and a few words later added: "The 200,000 or more monks are supported in their skyscraping and massive monasteries by the other four million of the population." If one-fourth of the males are monks and there are 200,000 monks, then there must be 800,000 males. This, subtracted from 4,000,000, leaves 3,200,000 females. By this reasoning, Tibet would have four women to one man, which is not only untrue, but very obviously so.

Mistakes mostly arise because there are about 4,500,000 Tibetans, but only about 1,000,000 of them live in Tibet. The others live in Szechuan, Yunnan, Chinghai and other border areas. They are Tibetans, but do not conform to the same customs as Tibetans in Tibet, though most of them are Lamaists. But they do not regard themselves as under political allegiance to Lhasa and their social systems are not the same as those on the plateau.

The approximately one million Tibetans in Tibet are socially disposed in about the following proportions:

Agricultural serfs	600,000
Pastoral serfs	200,000
Monks	150,000
Nobility, merchants, artisans, beggars	50,000

There are about 170 families of rich nobility under the Dalai Lama and about 200 such families in all. About one-seventh of the population is in the monasteries—more than one man in four. The figure of 50,000 also includes what may be as many as 10,000 well-to-do people who

[1] *Out of This World.*

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are not noble, but may be merchants or distant relatives of nobles.

Most people think of Tibet as a pastoral region, but the biggest social group is the land peasantry. They with the herdsmen, who come next in number, form the basis of Tibetan society and they are all serfs, tied to the land or their herds. One high monk said to me: "Unless there were serfs, how could life continue? We cannot live without serfs."

It is not easy to gain an understanding of the Tibetan land system. There is a general pattern, but it is not uniform. Each monastery is a law to itself within the general framework. It is a state within a state, with its own police, law and punishment. This is largely true of the estates of the great nobles. The monasteries, nobility and local governments of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas own practically all the land.

The peasants do not work for wages. For the right to cultivate the land of their overlords they must return a definite amount of produce: grain, feed or whatever crops the land bears. They must also do other specified work without pay, such as getting fuel and water, repairing or building houses. All these services come under the general heading of *ula* and are variable. Whatever the situation of his land, the peasant must go to do *ula* when needed. Some of the services are set by custom; in other cases the peasant simply goes when called upon. The best-hated form of *ula* is the supplying of transport animals and men to look after them to anyone bearing a government order entitling him to free transport. While doing this work, the peasant must provide his own food and animal feed and suffer whatever loss may occur, including the death of his animals, without recompense. If the route is too bad for animals to go, an *ula* order requires that porters must be supplied instead.

Tibetan economy is mainly agricultural and pastoral; the system of land tenure is mainly feudal. Peasants who want to go on a journey or get married or change in any way their relationship with their overlords must get permission. These are general conditions within which the actual conditions of peasants vary from estate to estate.

Only a small proportion of the total land in Tibet has been brought into cultivation and it would be easy for anyone to open up fresh land. But Tibet is short of manpower, and severe penalties have always been exacted from any peasant captured after attempting to run away. Nevertheless, many do run away, and in some areas round Gyantse half the families are "black people"—masterless *duichun* who have run from somewhere else, mainly because of debt. If a peasant had a bad

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year he must still pay his fixed proportion of crops and do his other labour service. Grain has to be borrowed to eat or for seed and debts begin, often at 50 per cent. interest a season. Some families owe 250 tons of grain, more than any foreseeable number of generations could repay, and sometimes the only way is to get out and start again somewhere else—but not on virgin land; that would not be permitted by the three great landowning groups, monasteries, nobles and government.

Old Sonam is a fairly typical serf: not the poorest, in most years he can just get by. He lives in a tiny adobe home high up on the Yalutsangpo Valley with his wife and children. "Old" is a relative word. I suppose Sonam was forty-five, but his wind-blackened face was carved deep with fixed runnels and the lower lids of his eyes had already dropped a little.

Sonam works 50 *ke* of land belonging to a Shigatse nobleman, as his family has worked for many generations, probably for centuries. In Tibet land is measured by the spread of seeds and a *ke* is about 1 quarter (28 lb.) English avoirdupois. Sonam's land is as much as 50 quarters or 12½ cwt. of barley seed will cover when scattered by hand—the universal Tibetan method. It takes about 6 quarters to cover 1 acre, so Sonam's land is just over 8 acres.

I spent a whole afternoon with Sonam in his little hut working out his crops, rent, *ula* and interest and reducing everything to grain in English quarters, and finally arrived at a notion of his way of living. These figures are based on an average expectation of multiplying his seed by five, which is slightly over the average for Tibet. They are for two periods—before the return of the Panchen Lama in 1951, and in 1955.

BEFORE THE PANCHEN LAMA'S RETURN

Income	*Quarters*	*Outgoings*	*Quarters*
Harvest	250	Tribute	66
		Rent	34
		Ula	21
		Interest on debts	10
		Various levies	4
		Seed	50
			185
		Sonam retains	65
	250		250

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Old Sonam's personal income was 16¼ cwt. of barley, or 26 per cent. of the crop. Stated in another way, 74 per cent. of the labour of Sonam's family went to defray tribute, rent, *ula* and interest, and to provide seed for the next harvest.

In 1953 the Panchen Lama and his officials decided that ancient debts were a serious problem for the peasants and would impede the future development of farming. All cases were reviewed; in some cases interest payments were wiped out and in others they were reduced. The Kashag did the same in the Dalai Lama's area. At the same time, some minor traditional levies were dropped. "Old debts"—those contracted before 1951—were to be treated differently from "new debts", which have been recently contracted, but much depends on the individual monastery or other moneylender. Reduction of interest is official policy and this exerts a moral pressure, but neither of the three local governments can actually enforce such rules in the remote valleys and on the great estates. In Sonam's case his interest, which was on an old debt, had been wiped out and his income had increased by some 25 per cent.

AFTER THE PANCHEN LAMA'S RETURN

Income	*Quarters*	*Outgoings*	*Quarters*
Harvest	250	Tribute	66
		Rent	34
		Interest (cancelled)	
		Ula	16
		Various levies	2
		Seed	50
			168
		Sonam retains	82
	250		250

His income has increased to 20½ cwt., a gain of 4¼, and the percentage of the gross crop that he retains is now 33. He did not know why his *ula* was now less than before. We estimated the difference to be worth 1 cwt. of grain. The 2 quarters less of levies were those waived by the Khenpo Committee at the time rents were reduced. With his increased income, he had bought a calf and was thinking of buying a

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milch cow if things continued to go well. For the rest, he can sell his extra grain and buy an occasional bit of meat and more tea and butter. The Sonams live mainly on vegetable soups with *tsamba* and some turnips, buckwheat bread and occasionally some cottage cheese (*chura*). Buttered tea is by no means an everyday drink for them, though it may be if they can get a milch cow.

Sonam cannot read and does not often wash, for the weather is either bitterly cold, or the sun is fierce and unimpeded by the air, or the sand-filled hurricanes are blowing in this land of extremes. A good layer of congealed dirt on the skin is a protection against all these things.

Sonam's case was average. Others were more remarkable, but do not give an accurate general picture. One peasant named Tuden Tsam had owed something like 12 tons of grain and ran away because his income was not enough to pay the interest. When he heard that he could borrow money without interest, he returned to Panjolin, his own country, and took out a loan. Then he found that the Khenpo Committee had reduced his debts and wiped out the interest. He was suddenly "wealthy". In two seasons he had managed to buy four mules and two cows. But this case is not typical. At the other extreme, near Lhasa, was an "over-serf" or bailiff who owed 10 tons and said he had no hope of ever clearing his inherited debt. He evaded the question why he did not take out an interest-free government loan and repay the principal so that he could gradually reduce the loan.

An investigation into two rural districts, Saima and Djunda, showed that there were sixty-two families of ordinary tied serfs and sixty-three families of "black folk"—masterless *duichun*. Nobody knew the exact population of the two districts, but there were certainly 125 families. None of the land in these two districts was owned by the monasteries; the landlords being the Khenpo Committee with 65 per cent. and the rest being owned by the nobility. Local authority is exerted by a *tsipon*, a rural official sent by the Khenpo Committee, who registers the masterless families. These rent land through other serfs, and the tied serfs oversee the land rented to the *duichun*. In order to prevent the *duichun* from going away, it has been ruled that any *duichun* family that leaves the district must still pay a regular tax to Saima or Djundu. They also have to do their share of unpaid labour. A serf who loses his ability to work or do *ula* because of sickness at once loses his land, which is then divided among other serfs. His family then becomes "black".

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Average landholdings were one *kang* of land to a family. This *kang* was variously described to me as between 8 and 12 acres, and would produce about 200 quarters net harvest. Each such unit has to return annually to the landlord:

60 quarters of grain
800 lb. of grass
900 lb. of wood
1 manpower (the full time labour of an adult or the equivalent)

Since 1953 the position here had changed to about the same extent as in Sonam's case by the liquidation of debts and other levies. Most of the families were a few hundredweights of grain better off than before.

In the Dalai Lama's area, Ü, one village called Gedja has ten households with a total of ninety-nine persons. I chose to investigate it because it looked so ordinary, with its cluster of sand-coloured houses, a little prayer wall and prayer flags fluttering from the roofs.

It is almost entirely self-contained economically, though barley is exchanged for butter, salt and tea. The better-off villagers get some money from selling dried dung as fuel in Lhasa—twenty-three miles away. Cloth is woven and shoes are made at home. The only furniture among the better-off peasants consists of a few straw-packed settees covered with poor-quality rugs. Very poor peasants do not weave, but rely on scraps of cast-off cloth and skins joined together for a covering. The houses, built by the serfs, belong to the land, and therefore to the landlord. Ploughing, transport and marketing is done by the men; milking, sowing and weeding by the women.

An "over-serf" headed the most well-to-do family, which had fifteen members and nine workers who were not related to the family. After all outgoings, including *ula*, this family had a small surplus in good years. The "over-serf" did little of the arduous work himself, wore a big earring and dressed in good woollen cloth.

Two other families were also doing well: one had twelve members and eight workers and the other ten members and five workers. These also had side-line occupations, such as transport and the sale of yak-dung. In a good year they might have a little surplus.

All three of these families have "hired" hands, mostly masterless people. (They were described as "orphans" or "homeless".) Their engagement is not for a set period, but permanently, and if they have

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children these also remain in the family. Some had been in one household for several generations and some were distantly related to their masters. They get food and clothes, but no money, work in the fields, and are usually kept by the family after they become too old to work. Such labourers, lower than the serf families that keep them, do not belong to the overlord directly. They are considerably used in better-off serf families to take the place of family members in doing *ula*.

Three other families in Gedja have about 3 acres of land each. The harvest is not enough to keep them. They have no non-family workers and, on the contrary, have to hire themselves out to supplement their income.

The other four households have less than 2 acres of land each and though they must pay rent and perform *ula* for this land, have to depend mainly on hiring themselves out.

Every household in the village has to supply at least one person full-time for *ula* service to Debung monastery. Rent here is 1 quarter of grain for 1 quarter of good land, plus labour service.

The diet of the best-off family was barley *tsamba*, potatoes, cabbage, turnip and sometimes meat, with plenty of buttered tea. The poorest families lived on bean "*tsamba*" and soups made mostly by boiling vegetables.

Since 1951 the main changes in village life had been due to interest-free agricultural loans. Every household in Gedja had taken such a loan, but most of the money had gone to the poorest families. County loan committees distribute the loans, which are financed by the People's Bank.

Loans in Gedja were distributed by a committee consisting of the *dzongpon* (county chief), some *tsipon* (village chiefs) and some leading monks. They meet as a committee and discuss which families have no seed or too little seed, regardless of their overall means. Next, mass meetings are called of three or four villages at a time where almost everyone gets a loan, big or small. These are the first public meetings ever held in Tibet and are run by the officials and monks. Representatives who attend from the People's Bank and the Communist Party do not intervene in the meetings. They provide the loans and the Tibetans distribute them. A Tibetan serf would not, in any case, accept such loans without his master's knowledge and agreement.

These mass loan meetings also provide the only opportunity most Tibetan commoners have of seeing a film and visiting a mobile clinic.

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Women attend these meetings and do not hesitate to speak up, for they do the sowing and harvesting. Women have no status in Buddhism, but conditions in Tibet grant them in many ways a higher social status than women in other parts of Asia.

Such loans have already been issued in most of the Ü district and are already bringing about some improvement in the crops. Care is taken to issue the loans in good, clean seed, whereas a peasant will normally weigh off a part of his crop for seed, or, if it is a private loan, must take what he is given. Interest-free loans of about £60,000 over the past four years in the relatively small Tsang area have led also to an increase of 7 per cent. in the area under crops. With such loans available, a peasant knows that, whatever his situation, he can plant his land without getting further into debt.

It can be imagined from what has been said that Tibetan agriculture is not efficient and the land tenure system provides little incentive to improve methods. Educated people are only to be found in the monasteries and among the nobility, who never go near their estates. They are satisfied so long as the bailiffs continue to turn over the traditional quantity of produce and take no interest in how it happens.

The serfs scratch the soil with light wooden ploughs, sometimes not even tipped with the usual 20-oz. iron share. Its shaft is a straight pole running to a cross-piece, which is tied to the horns of two yaks which have to push the plough with their heads instead of pulling with their shoulders, producing a furrow 4 inches deep.

Agriculture has been going backwards in Tibet, and the new experimental stations in Shigatse and Lhasa are the beginnings of an attempt to get it going forward.

Looking south from Debung Monastery, two things stand out from the flat plain: the ruins of a fort built by the Manchu General Chao Erh-fang to dominate the western approach to Lhasa and, below it, the new white buildings of the Agricultural Experimental Station, built since 1953.

A yak-skin boat has to be used to cross the Kyi River. A clumsy-looking craft universal in Tibet, it is made of raw yak-hide stretched over willow frames. Such coracles have to be light enough to be carried upstream, for nothing can be rowed against the stream of the mountain torrents. The boatmen's tame sheep which carry their belongings on small pack saddles follow their masters dutifully and jump into the boats as soon as they touch the water, without being told. Yak-skin boats are easily torn and very unstable. Unless you stand on

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the frames, which are very far apart, iron-shod boots can quickly go through the hide and scuttle the coracle.

A half mile away over the river is the agricultural station, on a wide expanse of former waste ground reclaimed by permission of the Kashag. Staff for the station arrived on horseback in 1953, before the roads were built, with microscopes and other instruments in their rolled bed quilts. They started work in tents where now there are sixty rooms, halls, laboratories and storehouses.

A graduate of Nanking University is Vice-Director of the station, one of a dozen agronomists there. My first question to him as we set off to see the station was: "With such poor soil and weather, how can the living conditions of the Tibetan people be improved? It must mean importing almost all their foodstuffs except meat."

"Most people thought like that about Tibet, and we did ourselves when we first came," Vice-Director Hu Ke-chun replied. "But in fact the crops we are growing here are as good as those in any part of China, and in some cases better. In spite of the altitude, conditions are in some ways better here than down on the lowlands. Look at the sunshine, for instance." As usual the sun was blazing out of a deep blue sky edged with snowy mountains. "It's very high, but don't forget that it's southerly."

He went on to tell me that since the station began work it had experimented with 84 different types of crops and 440 varieties of seed. "We have seen enough to know that the disadvantages of the plateau can be entirely overcome and that it also has some advantages." Vice-Director Hu Ke-chun showed me a field of Shansi spring wheat which was just being cut. It reached my shoulders and the ears were very heavy on a powerful stalk. There were several sorts of barley with heavy ears, long beards and strong stalks. Strong stalks are important in Tibet, where hail is common. There were huge cabbages; turnips like howitzer shells, one of which took two Tibetan girl assistants to hold while I photographed it; acres of willow saplings were being cultivated for planting as wind-breaks against the plateau's blizzards.

"That's the main thing—trees," said Hu Ke-chun. "With green belts, afforestation, we can do wonders. This place is really like a hothouse. And though the vegetables grow so large, they don't lose their flavour as a result. Hail is a problem and we haven't yet found the answer. But we will."

It was incredible to find tomatoes flourishing at 12,800 feet above

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sea-level in the open air. But Lhasa is not far north of Calcutta and the snowline is very high. Some crops can even grow at 14,000 feet here. Though there is little rain, there is plenty of water from the mountains for irrigation.

Hu Ke-chun pointed out a melon about 1 foot in diameter, a strain from the Soviet Union grafted on to a local squash. By its side was the same melon grown from seed without grafting—not as large as a tennis ball. "You see, the grafted melon grows more quickly and its leaves are bigger. The Tibetans call this 'marriage'. And we have found already some differences between the grafted melons and those from seed. For wheat we use vernalisation." He gave me the temperatures and periods for keeping the wheat seed before planting.

"It can be done," he went on; "but we still have a long way to go before crops like this are grown here generally. We use modern tools that go deep and good seed strains, and we fight pests. Given plenty of fertilisers, tools and insecticides, it would be very easy to double and treble Tibetan crop averages and grow many new crops, too." He paused, and added: "Of course, there are problems, especially conservatism."

He seemed very confident that he and the fifty-nine others at the station would see their dream of entirely transforming Tibetan agricultural methods come true. But he frankly said that they had taken only the first step of a long journey. Tibet's social system has been cutting the same groove for about 1,300 years and is well dug in. Religious ideas are against the use of insecticides, and even deep ploughing has its antagonists, since it disturbs the gods of the earth. Moreover, a serf has little enough to gain by doubling his grain crop if the net result is more work for him and it leaves him no better off.

"We face problems which are not insoluble, but which can only be solved gradually," Hu Ke-chun went on cheerfully. "In our opinion, the main thing is to get good seeds into the ground and give all the help we can to cultivate them properly. We are going to mechanise the farm and extend it and open others, and try to get as much good seed into the peasants' hands as possible." This, Hu added, could be assisted by issuing the new seeds in the form of agricultural loans. As new high-yielding varieties become available in quantity they can be channelled into the peasants' hands.

"At present we are willing to give free seeds to all peasants who are prepared to test them out with our help. We approached the local *dzongpon* and he agreed to call the peasants to a meeting early in the

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year. We gave them a talk on the new seeds and offered some free. Two peasants volunteered and we gave them wheat, pumpkin, tomato and potato. Once a week or so we send somebody along to check on what they are doing and to give advice. They do the work and we advise on watering and weeding—which they don't bother about much in Tibet. Well, they are getting fine crops. Their tomatoes are already gathered and people have come from quite long distances to see their fields. Now twenty or more other families have asked us for seeds. It's not much, but it's a start."

The serfs mainly like to get new vegetable seeds. For they pay their rent in grain, whereas they can sell vegetables on the Lhasa market. There is now in Lhasa an entire street of stalls selling vegetables grown from seeds given to the peasants by the P.L.A. and the station.

All the vegetables and the salad which I had for lunch at the station had been grown experimentally, and they were as good as I have tasted anywhere. Their enormous size had not caused any loss of flavour. During lunch Hu Ke-chun told me that much better crops could be had to the south-east, in Bomi district, which was lower, richer, warmer and well protected by forests. But this great area of vast potential wealth has at present only 10,000 people. "Manpower really is a serious matter here," he emphasised. With more than a quarter of all males in monasteries and debarred from production and reproduction, it is a problem that keeps getting worse.

"With manpower, any amount of fresh and excellent land could be opened up," said Hu. "I estimate that only 5 per cent. of Tibet's potential arable land is being worked." But since most of the manpower is tied, and monks are not allowed to plough, the other 95 per cent. will not be easy to open up.

There are twenty-five Tibetans working at the station and thirty-five Hans, mostly from Szechuan. Most of the Tibetans had been *duichun*, some were townsfolk who found the wages good, and a handful were serfs working there with the permission of their overlords. All the Hans on the station are learning Tibetan and the Tibetans are learning Han. Four of the Tibetans have gone to Peking for a long course of study.

"We shall succeed only by success," said Hu Ke-chun as I was stepping into the yak-skin boat to cross the river again. "If our crops are good, if they live while others die, if they are many times as great, not only here, but on the fields of the ordinary peasant, more people will want them, they will talk, and then we shall have difficulty

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in keeping pace with the demand. We can't go faster than the Tibetan people are willing to go. We can only show them new ways, encourage them and help them."

Back in Lhasa, I asked a leading Tibetan official, the Kashag expert on economic affairs, Sampo Dzaza, what he thought about the experimental station. His reply to this and his remarks on other matters give some insight into the mental strains that are being caused by the impact of modern life on Tibet's ancient society.

"The experimental station gives a good lead for the development of agriculture," said Sampo Dzaza. "Also the experiments in the pastoral areas are good. If the cattle can be kept healthy, the milk and butter will be better. All this is good and never before heard of in Tibetan history."

He pondered for a long time before he added: "Tibet is a holy place in which the people's work and lives are based on religion. Religion is more important to us than economy. We Tibetans see no reason to make reforms. There are those people who have land from the government [nobles—A.W.] and feel there is no need for anything else; some people have nothing from the government, but can work as officials and get salaries and live well; others get part of the land given by the government [serfs—A.W.] and have also found their way to a decent living."

He paused, and then went on again: "And if the government doesn't help people, they help themselves. For instance, the beggars. For if you believe in religion you can always arrange your life satisfactorily."

Sampo Dzaza emphasised the need for gradualness and said that industry was the foundation of advance, though he admitted he had no notion how to develop industry. "Tibet needs technique," he said. "Each year we send many young people to study in Chengtu and Peking. When they come back they have a desire to develop Tibet in the same way as things are going in the rest of China."

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

OUT AMONG THE YAKS

The indispensable yak—Relics of primitive democracy—Slowly dwindling herds—Barefoot in the snow—Peking rescues the wool market—Lhasa fights cattle plagues—Small successes—"I kill to save"

WORK on the grasslands begins before the highest snow mountain above the plateau is touched with pink by the morning sun. An ancient woman creeps out of a black yak-hair tent and hobbles to where yaks have been tethered all night in neat rows to ropes of their own hair. In a section set apart are shivering calves covered in rime and hoping for breakfast. They are not allowed to drink the valuable milk of their dams. The old woman sets down a wooden bucket filled with watery gruel of buttermilk and barley flour in which floats a big wooden ladle. She grabs the nearest calf and forces its head back till it is looking up at her. With the other hand she gropes for the ladle and takes a great mouthful of the gruel. Pressing the calf's lips open with her own, she forces the gruel into its mouth and repeats the dose until she judges it has had enough.

By the time she has fed thirty or so baby yaks, the sun is up and the day's bustle has begun. There are two milkings, butter and cheese to be made, yak-dung to be collected and dried, cattle to be sent out, brought in and examined, wool to be clipped in season and spun in all seasons; there is cooking, hunting, patching and other essential jobs that leave little enough time for the herds-folk's favourite pastimes, dancing and singing. And they must drop everything and go at once if they are called on to provide free transport for some silk-clad official passing through their district. That may take them away from home for several days, during which they must provide their own food.

One-fifth of Tibet's people herd yaks on the lonely grasslands, 14,000 feet above the heads of most people in the world, where only coarse grass and stunted herbage can survive and feed the patient, undemanding, docile yak—man's link with nature in Tibet. Without the yak's milk, butter, cheese, meat and wool, man in Tibet might never have passed the hunting stage. This distant relative of the North

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American buffalo shares the attentions of Tibetan herdsmen with sheep, goats, some cattle and the hybrid cattle-yak called *dzo*. But only the yak is indispensable.

Two things are vital on the grasslands—animals and grass. Both have been the subject of bitter blood feuds, lasting through centuries of retaliation and revenge, cattle-raids, sieges and full-scale clan war. Tibetan herdsmen are proud and fiery, quick to take offence, except with officials and especially monks, for they are the most superstitious of this most religious people. But quickly as they will draw a blade over an insult, they never forget a kindness. A herdsman who was cured at the People's Hospital in Lhasa while he was on a pilgrimage went away, and a long time later returned and tried to present to the doctor who had cured him the only two cattle he personally owned. Another herdsman refused to leave the hospital, saying: "You saved my life and now it is yours. I will always work for you."

The Black River area, north of Lhasa, is typical grassland. It is occupied by seven tribes of herdsmen subdivided into forty-five clans. Traditionally, the grazing rights and animals are tribal and clan property, but this has not been true for a very long time. The number of animals owned by the herdsmen is negligible. Like the land, the animals are owned by clan and tribal nobility, monasteries and local governments. But the method of selecting tribal and clan leaders still bears traces of their former communal nature. Each clan is headed by a *djapon*, who is supposed to be elected every three years. Where this takes place the person elected is generally from the same rich family. The tribal chiefs, *djijaps*, are sometimes chosen by the *djapons*, but sometimes the position is hereditary, as in the case of the Lady of De-Ge.

There are about 2,000,000 cattle and 5,000,000 sheep in Tibet, and the total number of herdsmen is estimated at 200,000. The cattle and grazing are leased to the herdsmen, and in return they hand over a certain amount of butter, cheese, wool and dried yak-dung. What remains is theirs. If there are any deaths in the herd, the herdsman is responsible. He must continue to render the same dues and can be called on at any time to hand over the original number of cattle or their equivalent in money. Herdsmen, like the peasants, have to turn over about 70 per cent. of the produce of their work.

Whatever the situation, the stipulated amount of produce must be handed over. If the grass is good and there are no epidemics, the herdsmen can get along. If the situation is bad, they may have to borrow to live. This is especially true if there are epidemics and many

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deaths in the herd. And if a herd is entirely wiped out, which also happens, the herdsman may have to go to work for others still bearing a debt that merely grows from year to year. A herdsman can gain such a tiny pittance as a hired man that he will only hire himself in the worst extremity.

Increases in the number of cattle do occur, but are kept to a minimum by the fact that meat does not have to be bought and paid for. Animals or meat have to be bartered for other necessities, such as tea, barley and wooden utensils, because no wood grows on the high grasslands. On the whole herdsmen eat little barley, and what increase occurs in their herds they mainly consume themselves, because meat and fats are almost indispensable in the rarefied air and cold of the plateau. In a good year they eat up the surplus, and when a bad one comes there is nothing to cushion it. They get into debt and the herds tend to decrease slowly, from generation to generation and century to century, as the population decreases.

Whether they lease their cattle from clan, Lhasa noble, monastery or government, the tributes are about the same—between 60 and 70 per cent. of the herds' output. In addition, the monasteries expect to receive a tithe from all herdsmen, apart from the usual fees for prayers during sickness, for divinations or at death to assist the smooth transmigration of the spirit to a better plane of existence. Herdsmen appear to be more devout than other Tibetans. Any group of herdsmen chatting in the open air or playing dice in the tent will always keep a prayer-wheel constantly revolving, passed from hand to hand as one or another acquires merit by spinning it, the others automatically telling their beads while talking.

Animals owned by the herdsmen themselves as distinct from those owned by their overlord are taxed by the Lhasa government, but this tax is hard to collect, and normally there is a tacit conspiracy between the herdsmen and the herd-owners to cheat the Dalai or Panchen authorities.

Nothing is spent on buying clothes. They wear either the coarsest homespun—natural coloured sheep's wool woven into foot-wide strips of cloth, very stiff and quite untearable—or sheepskin worn with the fur inside. In either case the robe is long and full, belted with hair rope. Often one arm is slipped out and the whole shoulder bared, for nothing is worn underneath and it is common to see women with their whole torso naked in hot weather. The robe also acts as bedding. Boots are too expensive for daily use, and I have seen Tibetan nomads

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—including small children—walking in several inches of snow in bare feet. Tibetans are hardy. The frail do not survive.

Women do most of the work—milking, driving in the cattle, parching and grinding barley, churning butter, collecting and drying yak-dung. Men hunt, trade, act as drovers and fight the clan battles, though these have much diminished since 1951. Hunting is important to supplement the larder. Some herdsmen will not eat domestic meat at all, because it narrows their margin of survival. Most herdsmen carry a rifle of antique make, but in some areas bows and arrows are still used for hunting.

Their amusements reflect their lives. In any big gathering of herdsmen—at fairs especially—the big events are horse-racing and target-shooting. Races happen without organisation. There is no particular course and a challenge or a wager is enough to start a race. Then they start competing at trick-riding, picking up objects from the saddle and going under the horse's belly at a gallop. This leads to target competitions, at which they excel. They are adept, while going full tilt on a pony, at shooting the middle out of a target with bow and arrow, then changing to a rifle and taking the bull's-eye of another target only 30 yards further on. Archery contests with broad-headed arrows for accuracy and distance come next, and singing and dancing to round off the day.

Interest-free loans are penetrating into the pasture-lands as well as the farm-lands, but much more slowly. General agreement about the issuing of loans was reached with the tribe and clan leaders, but the distances are great and a nomadic way of life does not help. Normally a herdsman who wanted a loan would go to the monastery and pay interest of 5, 15 or even 50 per cent., depending on urgency and security. Loans could be urgent, for, as Jume Bajang told me in De-Ge, if tribute was not paid on the nail it could mean several hundred lashes and gaol—which would also mean the loss of the herd.

One thing that turned opinion on the grasslands decidedly in favour of the central authorities in Peking was the buying of Tibetan wool stocks. This story was told to me in the first place by a monk merchant named Chamba, chief merchant of the Kanze Monastery, as we sat among the images, butter lamps and money chests in his Lhasa room, and was later confirmed by people in the pasturelands. Chamba was dressed in ordinary clothes such as any merchant might wear but his hair was cropped: the only sign that he was a monk. He sat cross-legged on a settee with the elements of his calling—leather

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money satchel, abacus and rosary—by his side. He trades mainly in wool, but also in musk, saffron, and the strange Tibetan medical speciality called worm-grass.

According to Chamba and others, in the early part of 1951 very attractive prices were offered to Tibetan wool merchants for the next wool crop. That was before the Tibetan delegation had decided to go to Peking, and when various interested parties were trying to woo Tibet from China. But while Tibetan merchants were scouring the grassland and buying wool, the agreement between Lhasa and Peking was signed. The price of wool promptly sank or was pushed down to 60 or 70 rupees per *maund*, and the whole of Tibet's wool market faced disaster, for this was only about one-third of the real price.

At this point the Peking government stepped in and bought the whole stock at 180 rupees per *maund*, an action that did more to reassure the Tibetans of the goodwill and honesty of the new Chinese government than a great deal of talk.

A herdsman can still survive if his wool is not sold; nearly half of the wool produced in Tibet never finds its way into the market. But if his animals die it is disaster. Epidemic cattle diseases sweep through whole areas and leave the plateau littered with dead. In Tibet such afflictions are seen as a divine penalty imposed for some previous wickedness.

A stocky and very ordinary Tibetan girl named Arkha gave me a herd-girl's view of epidemics and veterinary work when I visited the new Lhasa Serum Factory, about three miles from the Potala. In one of the dissecting-rooms of the factory I saw this Tibetan girl assisting in an autopsy on a rat during research into Tibetan cattle pleuro-pneumonia. It was surprising to see a Tibetan doing such work, because Lamaism forbids the taking of life. This girl from Kanze was pointed out as one of the factory's best workers, so I waited for her to come out of the sterile room and tell me her history.

Before 1950 her family had been doing well. They had about thirty animals of their own and by paying for grazing rights were making an independent living. Then in 1950 came rinderpest.

"One after another we watched our animals die. We did all we knew: gave them herbs, dried the kidneys and hearts of the dead ones and ground them up to put in the nostrils of the sick ones. We sold all we could and gave the money to the monks to pray. We lost everything.

"At the same time the People's Army came. My mother and father

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had lost their independence, but I was only sixteen and did not have to do labour service. I helped the P.L.A. with fuel and transport and then worked on building the highway."

She told me about her good wages and the things she heard about education and what a new Tibet could be like. "The nearer I got to eighteen, when I would have to do *ula*, the more I thought about going to study. I told the P.L.A. men and they encouraged me. So I applied to go to school.

"I didn't ask anyone's permission, I just went to the Kanting Institute for National Minorities. I learned how to write in Tibetan and learned Han and how we could help in many ways to improve Tibet. When they asked me what I wanted to do, I had long made up my mind. I had heard about veterinary work; how cattle diseases could be prevented and cured. If I could stop what happened to my family happening to others, that would be a wonderful thing for Tibet. So I asked to do that work, and they were delighted."

Arkha then went to a veterinary college in Chengtu and in 1954 came to Lhasa to the serum factory to put her theoretical training to use.

The factory, a whitewashed block of adobe buildings on the way to Sera monastery, was just going into production in autumn 1955. Rinderpest was the first target and the factory was using sheep lymph to make serum by a method discovered in China in 1951. Since putting down its roots in 1952, the factory has been doing research into the character of cattle bacteria in Tibet and developing sera to combat them.

In one room, white-smocked and masked Tibetan assistants were injecting sheep serum into yaks from giant hypodermic syringes with thick needles. But even as these big-bore hollow needles went home, the yaks did not bellow or struggle. Imperturbable as ever, they took the needles and pints of serum with no more than a wriggle and a scared glare from their foolish eyes. This serum makes the animal immune. Then still higher immunity is conferred by injecting infected blood, which makes the beast produce antibodies. Blood from such high-immunity animals is used as anti-serum for curing cattle which have the disease. The sheep lymph is used for mass preventive inoculation.

In spite of the impious nature of veterinary work, no fewer than eighty-six Tibetans are doing it. Eight work in the Lhasa factory, thirteen have gone to Peking to study sera manufacture and eighteen

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to study veterinary medicine. The rest are working in veterinary teams out on the grasslands trying to convince the herdsmen by experience that their cattle can be saved by these new-fangled methods. Some idea of the conservatism of the pastoral folk can be gained from the fact, that while the People's Hospitals in Tibet had given nearly 700,000 treatments to humans since 1952, the veterinary stations, clinics and mobile teams had only treated 200,000 cattle in the same time.

Director Tu Hsin-ming told me that the work I had seen Arkha doing was connected with the production of a serum for combating cattle pleuro-pneumonia, due to go into production in 1956 along with others against haemorrhagic septicaemia and a virulent anthrax. Rinderpest serum was already in production. In almost the same words as the Vice-Director of the agricultural station, he said: "It will come slowly at first, but it will come. When the herdsmen find that the cattle we have treated live and those that have not been treated die, they will all want treatment and we shall really have to work hard to supply the need. All we can do now is to try to persuade them to let us inoculate." To the herdsmen it is one thing to allow a sick animal to be treated by sinful methods, but to have strange fluids injected into his whole herd appears to be sheer madness, apart from the price that might have to be paid in future transmigrations for such iniquity.

As we sat in the factory boardroom, drinking green China tea and eating the inevitable "Morton's Sweets of Distinction" that had come toilfully over the passes from India by yak, I asked Arkha: "How about the killing you have to do? For example, that rat I saw you dissecting this morning; surely this place is responsible for its death, and you too. How do you see that from the religious standpoint?"

It was a crude question and I felt discourteous in asking it, but Arkha was clearly no stranger to this problem. She replied at once: "Of course it's a sin. I understand that. But if what I am doing is going to save other lives, that is some merit, too. That's how I look at it. It will help people and save the lives of cattle."

I asked what she thought about killing all the bacteria that made the cattle sick: wasn't that sinful? Her reply was difficult to follow. It seemed that she personally identified these with malignant devils, but had no religious sanction for doing so. She was entirely firm in her belief that science could and should help men, but had not yet reconciled this view with her religious belief. She worried that with all the time needed for work and study there was not enough time for religious

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observance. She ought to pray more, she said, but implied that if science existed to help people, maybe some merit was picked up along the way. Her profession was more real to her than anything else, and she was soon telling me that she hoped to be able to perform dissections by herself before long.

I asked a polite, leave-taking question: "What do you do on your day off?"

She said: "I go into Lhasa and meet a friend of mine from Kanze who works in the People's Hospital. We go to the temples to pray to be forgiven for the sins we have to commit in our work."

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE ALL-EMBRACING MERCHANT

"Presence Tea"—Monk traders—Road to India—Trade as quickest way to increase buying power—Grain thirty years old—Five lorries equals 2,000 yaks—State keeps out of retail trade—Prices down 13·3 per cent. in one year

TIBETAN aristocrats, unlike their western counterparts, do not look down on trade; they and the leading monks are the biggest traders. Tibetan society has allowed no "third estate" to develop as rival to the dominance of the church and gentry but absorbed the merchants into that unique creation of Tibetan society—the monk, noble, official and merchant embodied in a single person. Far from being despised, the lay commoners who have the wit to become rising merchants are not class rivals but potential officials, nobles and eventually members of the ruling clergy.

The young Tibetan who helped me so much in Lhasa was an example of the process. His full name is Sadu-Tschang Rinchen and he is the seventh son of one of the biggest Tibetan merchants in Kalimpong. He was educated in that city and Darjeeling, speaks Tibetan, Han, Nepalese, English and Hindi—all fluently—and took Senior Cambridge in mathematics, geography, physics, chemistry and Hindi. When the former Regent, Retin, was arrested in 1947, Sadu's family came under suspicion of being implicated in a planned *coup d'état* and had to flee. They sealed their houses in Lhasa, Pari and elsewhere, but these were broken into and looted during the family's exile in Kalimpong. Eventually the family was cleared of all suspicion and offered a fifth-class official post as compensation for the damage it had suffered. The up-and-coming Rinchen was selected by the family to take this honour on its behalf and went to the "Presence Tea", the ritual where the Dalai Lama hears reports, appoints officials and conducts such business. It was a big step up the ladder to aristocracy for this successful merchant family.

Considering the small overall volume of Tibetan trade, it is amazing to find so many people engaged in it, including most monks of high rank, clerical and lay officials and such commoners as are not tied to any estate.

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Every monastery "state" has its own trading organisation and itinerant monk merchants, like Chamba, who wander from India and Nepal to Chengtu and Shanghai, buying and selling on behalf of the monastery. A fine network of trade covers even the remotest parts of the plateau, where yaks cannot clamber and goats have to be used as pack animals. But closely woven as it is, Tibetan trade is spread very thin, being based mainly on the surplus that is left after 1,000,000 people have consumed a survival ration of their low annual grain crop and the produce of 2,000,000 cattle and 5,000,000 sheep. And even of that tiny product a good deal is burned to the gods or left to rot.

How thinly it is spread was indicated when the monk-merchant Chamba, who, it must be remembered, is the chief merchant of the very large Kanze Monastery, described as reasonably profitable a trip he made in 1954 when he took four and a half months to gather 75 tons of wool, ship it on 1,500 yaks to Kalimpong, buy about 17 tons of foreign goods and return with only 340 yaks loaded. "I made nothing at all on the wool, but paid my expenses. But I made 15 to 20 per cent. on the goods I brought back from India," he said with evident satisfaction. "I go to India when I like and I can get foreign exchange from the People's Bank simply for the asking. I have to pay a tax on goods going into India, but no duties on anything coming back into Tibet.[1] On the other hand, the Indian market is not so active. It's easier to buy saleable goods made in Shanghai and other parts of China."

The Lhasa market was complicated. Goods coming from India included many light luxury goods suitable for carrying by yak and able to demand relatively high prices from well-to-do Tibetans and Han working personnel in Tibet. In Lhasa it was easy to buy first-class English cloth, face-cream, aluminium ware, Raleigh bicycles, B.S.A. motor cycles and Swiss watches. I bought the latest model Rolleiflex 2·8 camera for the equivalent of £72. The little shops around the Parkhor were jammed with such items and even displayed imported cooking oil in a city where tons of butter are daily burned to the gods. In exchange for such imports, Tibet sent to India wool, musk, yak-tails, bristles, herbs and salt, averaging 2,500 yak-loads a month in 1954, which had risen to 3,300 monthly in the first six months of 1955. All these figures, of course, represented trade by yak-back, which imposed its own limitations. Now there is a first-class highway

[1] The one-way duty at the Indian border is one of the last relics of the former unequal trading agreements exacted by the British fifty years ago.

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between Lhasa and the Indian border, and the pattern of trade is certain to change as a result.

This new road, on which I travelled as far as Gyantse, one stage from the Indian border, brings Lhasa to within two days' journey of India by lorry and brings in sight the possibility of travelling from Peking to any part of India by land. While these Tibetan trunk routes were being built, there was a good deal of propaganda in the West that they were military roads directed against India. The Indians do not appear to have taken this view. Indeed, if the agreement on trade between India and Tibet was to have any meaning, it seemed as necessary to have a road up to the Indian border from the Tibetan side as it was to have roads and a railway from the Indian side. To get a relatively impartial opinion, I asked a big Lhasa trader for his view. He said: "If the Chinese had wanted to do it, they could have stopped building the road at Lhasa and by refusing to supply rupees could have completely strangled trade between Lhasa and India. Goods which have to come by yak cannot compete with goods that come by lorry, even if they have to come from Chengtu or even Shanghai, But they helped us to trade with India.

"When the Communists first came here all sorts of people expected all sorts of things to happen. Some monks expected religion to be crushed. Wealthy people expected to lose their property. I thought: 'That's the end of trade between India and Nepal and Tibet.' But not at all. I got all the rupees I needed to carry on and even expand my trade. Now with the new road I shall be able to hire lorries and ship different goods to Lhasa, more bulky goods that wouldn't travel by yak. In any case, pushing the new road through to the Indian border shows there's no intention to cut off trade in that direction."

In the other direction trade is also increasing quickly as a result of the new roads. Tibetan goods going eastward through the Chamdo Trading Company jumped from 13,000 silver dollars monthly in 1953 to nearly 70,000 in 1955, and goods going into Tibet from the east were valued at 12,000,000 silver dollars in 1954, mostly in tea, cloth, farm tools, chinaware, cigarettes, wines and silks. These figures do not represent the trading limit of Tibet's present production level, because half of Tibet's marketable wool never gets to market. It is simply wasted. Potential supplies of musk, furs, valuable herbs and borax have not been scratched.

Although in the long run improved farming, cattle farming and developed industry will be needed to make any fundamental change in

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the living conditions of the Tibetan people, an immediate increase in spending power can be effected by expanding trade and speeding up the turnover of capital.

Hsia Chung-yuan, an expert[1] on Tibetan trading questions, gave me an outline of the Chinese government's policy on trade in Tibet. He confirmed what Tibetan merchants had told me. "After 1951," Hsia said, "the merchants in Tibet had many doubts about what would happen. They imagined that it would no longer be possible to get foreign exchange and that private trade would be strangled by state trade. Actually the State does not engage in retail trade in Tibet, and the People's Bank approved the sale of 146 million rupees before the highways opened. At the same time, commercial loans were issued at low interest and we placed big orders on contract with the merchants. Foreign and domestic trade have been promoted by these measures and the turnover of commercial and working capital has been speeded up."

To ensure stability of money and prices, Hsia said, the People's Bank maintains a strict control of currency issued to the Han working personnel and Chinese army men. Only 20 per cent. of their wages are paid in cash in Tibet, an amount which is more than covered by incoming goods, and the rest is deposited for them. At the same time, stocks of grain are kept in hand to prevent speculation and keep down prices. Grain-hoarding is an old Tibetan custom, so much so that during the Gyantse floods, when grain was needed for relief, it was found that the lower levels of grain stocks in the fort there dated from thirty years ago.

"If there is a local shortage in any town, and merchants try to force up prices, we can put grain into the market at a price slightly above the prices in the villages and by this means lure grain into the market to prevent profiteering.

"Before the highways opened nearly 300,000 loads of goods, equal to about 50,000 silver dollars, came from India through Yatung alone, and this helped to stabilise the market. Production also has been slightly raised by interest-free bank loans to peasants and herdsmen.

"We have also aimed at self-sufficiency of the army and working personnel here," Hsia went on. "In spite of lack of tools and the totally different situation here, our civilian people opened up 4,000 acres of virgin land. The army did similar work, and this all had a big political effect, because the Tibetan people could see that we were nothing like

[1] Vice-Secretary of the Financial and Economic Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Working Committee in Tibet.

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previous Chinese governments, whose personnel simply battened on the people.

"As a result especially of the opening of the roads, freight costs are down and turnover time shorter, formerly stagnant Tibetan goods are finding a ready outlet at higher prices and the general effect is good."

Merchant Chamba cheerfully confirmed that trade had never been better. As we sat in his room eating sweet cottage cheese and drinking tea, he explained that when he was using only animal transport he would buy only light goods, mostly luxuries, apart from tea, which is a necessity in Tibet. "I went for high returns on capital, like everyone else, and I didn't expect to make a profit out of Tibetan goods. Now musk fetches 30 silver dollars an ounce instead of 10. I trade mostly in wool, musk, saffron and worm-grass, and the State Trading Company will pay good prices for all I can sell. In two weeks with five lorries I can do what used to take two months with 500 yaks. I turn my capital over three times a year instead of once. This results in steadier profits, because prices are down and sales are up."

Prices of manufactured goods in Chamdo, where the road had opened in 1952, had fallen an average of 13·3 per cent. between 1954 and 1955. On the other hand, prices of Tibetan wool were up by more than 50 per cent. In Lhasa the number of shops and stalls had risen from 1,917 to 2,245 since the road opened, in less than a year.

Tibetan merchants perform an essential service in taking goods to the remote valleys and bartering them for whatever the herdsmen and peasants have to offer. State trading companies sell only wholesale in order not to damage the business of private merchants, but they have various methods of trying to ensure that the merchants pass the benefits of reduced costs to the consumer. In the Black River district, members of the Djanpore clan told me that tea was almost 30 per cent. cheaper since the road reached Lhasa, though they themselves are very far from the road. In some cases merchants are now acting as agents for the State, buying tea at a fixed price and selling with a fixed rate of profit.

"Our trading policy," Hsia Chung-yuan said, "is to increase Tibetan domestic trade to the greatest possible extent, to ensure that Tibetan merchants' working capital is used in such a way that it will encourage production in Tibet. At the same time we shall do all we can to maintain and develop Tibetan trade with foreign countries to help to meet the developing needs here."

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

TIBET'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

Link with Caxton—No word for the H-bomb—Creating a twentieth-century language—"Dbugs" spells "Ú"—Tibet's first industrial workers —British Wireless Stations—The earth stays flat

IN the printing shop that has been in the possession of the Lord of De-Ge's family for fifty-one generations I handled wood-blocks that were in use when Caxton printed his first book and have been in use ever since. Each "plank", 2 feet by 8 inches, is carved back and front to print both sides of a single page of the scriptures. Serious damage or wear means the recutting of the entire page, work which is done by unpaid handicraftsmen, who work for their food and lodging. No presses are used, there is no make-ready, no imposing, and the paper is so rough that a clean impress is almost impossible anyway.

A monk mixes the water-based ink, using soot or ochre for black or red, and ladles it out into brass basins for the printers. These are also monks who sit two by two facing each other, their bare arms black or red to the elbow, with the long engraved wood-block between their four knees. One of them sloshes the ink on with a stiff brush while the other slaps a piece of damp paper on it and runs over it with a cloth-covered rolling pin. Little monks, "printer's devils", rush around with basins of ink and piles of torn-edged paper and get shouted at in true printshop style. It takes seven seconds to print one side of a page, fourteen seconds for a page.

It might appear that in a country where printing had been going on for so long it would be comparatively easy to set up a newspaper, but this was far from true. Printing in Tibet has always meant religious printing—fixed, unchanging either in language or style as the centuries passed. There was no movable type, no machines, no journalists, no printing workers, no tradition of reading news except among a handful of people who had old copies of the Indian or English newspapers carried over the passes on yaks. A small duplicated paper called *Brief News* was started by the Communist Party Working Committee soon after it got to Lhasa in 1951, and at the same time type-designers in Peking were asked to design type and make type-moulds for the Tibetan language. Orders were placed for typecasting machines and

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printing presses to be sent to Lhasa as soon as the new road was opened. When duplicating became inadequate to meet the increasing demand for the little paper, it was printed from lithographic stones.

Type-moulds and printing machinery were among the first things to come along the new road, and while they were being assembled some Tibetans were being trained in typesetting. Four months after the road was opened the first newspaper page ever printed in Tibet rolled off the press, on May 4, 1955. And now behind the new Post Office there is the familiar clatter of type-casting machinery and the rumble of the flat-bed cylinder presses as they roll off the 3,000 copies of each issue of *Brief News* in its modern dress. There are three issues weekly, but plans are in hand for a daily paper as soon as some practical difficulties can be solved. Some of those difficulties stem from the antique nature of the Tibetan language itself.

Apart from differences of dialect, there are three different spoken languages, and a written language different from any of them. The variations in the spoken language express varying degrees of respect for superiors and vice-versa, and the written language is classical in form and not widely understood; but if the colloquial language is written down it appears to a literate person to be erroneous and illiterate. None of these forms of the language has any words at all for quite ordinary modern things, no scientific terminology and no political vocabulary. Here is a language which in the twentieth century had no word for "lorry", "tractor", "locomotive", "aeroplane", "communism", "socialism", "hydrogen", "atom" and so on.

A twelve-man committee was set up to tackle these problems, led by the ex-Living Buddha Dzazu Ngawang Losan, who, having resigned from being a Living Buddha, had few duties and much experience. The committee also included the ubiquitous modernist, Djen Lojen. This small body of enthusiasts translates and unifies all the material for the paper, translates books and has begun to develop the Tibetan language towards more modern forms. There is already a *Dictionary of New Terms* and a complete Han-Tibetan dictionary is being compiled.

The ex-Living Buddha described the principles used in inventing new words. Where there are already Tibetan words that can be put together to convey the meaning of the new idea or thing, this is done; but where that is not possible, the Chinese sound is taken into Tibetan. I asked how they translated "communism", which falls into the latter group because there is no Tibetan word which has such

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a meaning. In Han it is "*Kung-chan-chu-yi*", which means "public-means-of-production-ism". In Tibetan it becomes "*Kung-chan-renru*", which means "Kungchanism" and stands for what "communism" means in English. When a new word appears in the newspaper its meaning is explained in brackets for the first few times and is then made current.

"It is absolutely essential to change the Tibetan language," the ex-Living Buddha stressed. "It takes seven or eight words of Tibetan to write what can be written in two or three words of Han, and even then ordinary people cannot understand what is written. I am now in very good spirits," the bright-eyed old man went on, "because now I can put all those years of studying literature to good use in the service of a new Tibet, to improve our language and make it useful to all." This reform also involves a reform of spelling in the long run, for Tibetan spelling is among the most anachronistic anywhere. The name of the region under the Dalai Lama is pronounced "Ü" but is spelt "Dbugs". Similarly the word for rice, pronounced "De" is spelt "Hbras".

Editorially *Brief News* mainly runs on translations of reports from the *New China News Agency* (*Hsinhua*) and of experienced Han reporters who go news-gathering for a paper of the same name printed in the Han language. At the same time the paper is training its own staff for later independent production. Readers of *Brief News* are mainly high and middle nobles and monks in Lhasa and the provinces, where it goes to about 400 monasteries, and even gets as far as Lamaist monasteries in Harbin, thousands of miles away. It is the first secular reading matter ever read by monks, who formerly read only the scriptures. There are separate duplicated local papers in Shigatse and Chamdo which will continue to operate until Tibet has autonomy and probably afterwards also, in view of the distances involved.

Tibetan workers are now composing the type for the Lhasa paper and are doing the make-up on the "stone", though this work, when I was there, was still being supervised by a Han printer. Hans are still in the machine shop, training their Tibetan assistants to take over control as soon as possible. Type-casting is already done by Tibetans. This small band of less than a dozen newly-trained Tibetan printers were the first industrial wage-workers in Tibet, and the only ones at the time I was there. The solitary woman compositor was the first and only industrial woman worker then. They were few, but they represented the new Tibet, for here was printing, already out of the stage of carved

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wooden planks and cloth-covered rolling pins and into the age of power presses and typecasting machines. This small group, with their long plaits wound round their heads and big earrings, were the forerunners of Tibetan tractor-drivers, electricians, the entire class of industrial workers which are presaged in the Dalai Lama's remark that the future of Tibet lies in socialism. It is striking, too, that Tibet's first industrial workers should be those who print a paper that can only be read by the literate ruling class inside and outside the monasteries.

For the rest, the commonalty, and then only those inside the towns, the only means of getting the news is through the loudspeaker broadcasts in the streets. These are line broadcasts, not wireless transmissions.

Tibet neither had nor has any central wireless broadcasting station for the public. It would have little value at this time, because the few people who have wireless receivers are in any case those who can read the papers. Before the mass of illiterate peasants and herdsmen can have access to wireless receivers in their remote valleys, the problem of electric power has to be solved, among others. Present aims, therefore, are to establish a network of interconnected line-broadcasts or relay stations to cover every main town with loudspeakers giving the news, and at the same time to develop the staff and organisation to set up a wireless broadcasting system later.

Three days a week at eleven in the morning the loudspeakers crackle and a Tibetan girl's voice announces "*Lhasa Guyo Djansan Lojo*", which means "This is the Lhasa Line Broadcasting Station." This hour-long newscast over eleven loudspeakers in the city goes out when there is no interference with religious services, and changes are made during festivals to miss the religious events. Public requests for loudspeakers to be installed in other areas are always referred to the monasteries. One such request was made by the people who live in Sho, the little township at the foot of the Potala, but no loudspeaker was installed there.

The two girl announcers are Ishi Wongdiu, twenty-six-year-old daughter of a Tsang nobleman, and Sonam Namu, sixteen-year-old daughter of a Lhasa merchant. Their pay is very high by Tibetan standards—90 silver dollars a month. The news is mostly what goes into *Brief News*, translated into still more simple spoken language, and talks on hygiene, features, story-reading and story-telling in popular language, songs and music.

The loudspeakers are sometimes used by the Tibetan Local Government to broadcast important statements to the Lhasa public, and on one

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occasion were used to counteract a rumour that the Dalai Lama, who was in Peking at the time, was being held there and would never return to Lhasa. To the infinite relief and astonishment of the Lhasa public, they one day heard the voice of their ruler coming over the line-broadcast assuring them that he was in Peking conducting important negotiations and would return very soon.

It is now commonplace to see crowds of Lhasans standing listening to a talk on pre-natal care, how to prevent epidemics and how to join the campaign to ban nuclear weapons. It is no easy assignment to get across the idea of nuclear weapons to people who only recently acquired the word for "hydrogen" and have never seen bombs or bombing. I asked Djen Lojen one day what Tibetans knew about hydrogen bombs. He said that most people were aware of them and of what they did. He said there were two popular sayings in Tibet about the bombs: "Whoever uses the hydrogen bomb is the enemy of all mankind" and "Whoever uses the hydrogen bomb is the king of the devils".

Hygiene is a touchy subject on the air, because it is not possible to teach any aspect of science that too sharply contradicts Lamaism. This means there can be no campaigns yet against lice and flies, no propaganda about health that stresses killing bacteria, and even the question of whether the earth is flat or whether it moves round the sun is just as full of politics in present-day Tibet as it was in Galileo's Europe.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION BEGINS

Why Tibet had no wheels—The wealthy are not rich—Gold galore—Mining angers the gods—Scientists go to Lhasa—Hides and wool thrown away—Craftsmen are not free—Who will man Tibet's factories—Jersi Tseren and the would-be nun

IN Lhasa I met only one Tibetan layman with short hair, done in western style and parted at the side. All other nobles wear their hair long and woven into the complicated double top-knot in which their golden *gao* is pinned. Djen Lojen cuts his hair and dispenses with the *gao* and 6-inch turquoise earring by special permission of the Dalai Lama. "Such things make my head ache," he said during one of the many discussions I had with him. He is a modernist and that rare thing, a Tibetan lay intellectual. I asked him a question that had troubled me: Why was the wheel not used in Tibet? Had it been forbidden, as some writers claimed?

"Any such reports are wrong," he answered. "There has never been an edict forbidding the use of the wheel. Tibet is backward and there is no tendency to change. If wheels came into use, this would represent a change from old to new. Other changes would follow in the rear. This is understood, and so it has not happened."

The wheel remained unused, roads were not developed and Tibet has no industry, absolutely none. It is a very simple economy with a low level of production, and what is not consumed ends up mostly in the monasteries—coating the images and *chortens* with gold and jewels or butter-smoke. Wealthy Tibetans wear costly imported silks and wrist-watches; sprigs of noble houses now use motor-cycles—that working-class means of transport in the West—but they are not rich by the standards of industrial countries. The house of Tibet's richest man, Tsarong, the best private house in Tibet, would not satisfy a successful London barrister. A nephew of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama told me that the income from his estates was 12 tons of butter and cheese a year, which was stored and sold from his Lhasa home. He also got, of course, perquisites from an official post.

Because Lhasa rugs are famous, I asked to see how they were made,

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and was taken to a new carpet factory on the edge of the city, now housed in a former private dwelling. In the first courtyard, under a roof where the horses of guests used to be stalled, five cheerful women sat in striped aprons spinning carpet yarn—on spinning wheels. I looked closer at this revolutionary innovation and found that the driving wheels were made from the metal ends of P.L.A. telephone wire drums, riveted together so that the flanges made a groove from the driving band, and turned by foot-treadles. This was the first Tibetan thread ever spun on anything but a hand-bobbin, the first use of the wheel in production.

The factory director, Gunga Namdiel, showed me round. It was an efficient handicrafts factory with carding-, spinning- and dyeing-rooms, the finished product being made on hand-looms upstairs. "In the old days," Gunga said, "carpets were made in the homes of the weavers and the dyeing and spinning were done elsewhere. Now the Kashag has set up this factory to increase the output of our carpets and improve their quality." As far as I could discover, this was the only change that had been made in Tibetan manufacturing methods for centuries. Everything is hand-made by artisans in unchanging formal styles.

What the future of industry in Tibet will be is very hard to foresee. There are rich mineral deposits. At least forty valuable materials were discovered by a geological mission from Peking in 1953, including iron, lead, copper, zinc, sulphur and borax. Gold is so plentiful that the Tibetans can wash all they need from the rivers. In fact, this is the only way it ever has been got in Tibet, because Lamaism rules that mining annoys the gods of the earth. Experts consider that scientific processing even of already-washed gold-bearing sands would be a paying proposition.

Mining is not the only problem. Any industry is likely to find some unexpected taboo blocking the way. Terrific mental conflict becomes apparent as soon as any discussion with Tibetans goes below the surface. There was the monk Director of the Lhasa Mint, an official next in rank to a cabinet minister, a travelled man who went to Peking and also to Korea to see the war situation. This thoughtful official, carefully measuring every word, spoke of his travels throughout China. "It was a joy to me to see the construction going on in China. Tibet can only develop in the same way. I saw the improvement of the Inner Mongolian cattle as a result of the new vaccines and the fight against epidemics. With our serum factory here, we are taking the same

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road. I saw that wool was better in Inner Mongolia and prices were better for the grower and consumer, with middle-men's charges down.

"These things can also be done in Tibet in the same way: for example, tinning milk, tanning hides instead of wasting them. Now we only produce rough hand-made wool, and it would be better if we had textile factories. Even such things can come here now that we have the roads.

"But the tinning of meat will be hampered in Tibet by religious scruples," he added. He took a sip of tea, thought for a long time and went on still more slowly: "We live in a changing world that always improves. We cannot avoid that some small things may not be in conformity with religion, so long as we do not violate our main religious precepts."

He searched for an example. "Take the nomads. They cannot avoid eating meat, though it is against our religion. This is something that the individual must decide for himself. Nevertheless, eating meat is against our religion. Also there are such occasions as, say, when the animal is dead. Even if I eat it, I haven't killed it."

He summed up equivocally: "For the sake of our future life, we have to go through many difficulties. With this in mind, the industrialisation of Tibet is good."

Considering these mental stresses and vacillations, the meeting that took place in Peking on March 9, 1955, was a turn in Tibetan history, though I did not realise how important it was until I had visited Tibet. It was a meeting of the Chinese State Council addressed by the Dalai and Panchen Lamas; Ngabou Kalon, representing the Kashag; Dji Jigme representing the Panchen Khenpo Committee; and Chang Ching-wu, who represents the People's Government in Lhasa. Everyone agreed that a committee should be set up to prepare for Tibetan autonomy, and that a number of measures should be taken to develop industry in Tibet.

Among these were the building of a hydro-electric power station in Lhasa and a thermo-power station in Shigatse; construction of dykes, gates and dams to protect both cities from recurrent floods and to help irrigation; expansion of the experimental farms, schools and buildings and the metalling of roads in both cities. Tibet's first modern factories, a tannery, leather goods factory and iron works, would be built in Lhasa. Funds and technicians for all these projects would be provided by the State Council.

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At this meeting the Dalai and Panchen Lamas confirmed that they had settled the old issues that had caused dissension between the two groups and had also, as the Dalai Lama put it, "eliminated the legacy of misunderstanding between the Han and Tibetan peoples". During their long stay in China, I saw the two young God-Rulers very often, always together chatting happily as two young men might anywhere. Only together—two Living Gods equal in spirit and rank—could they really behave as young people. On all other occasions they must maintain their distance from all other men as well as absolute separation from women.

Three days after that State Council meeting, on March 12, a team of seventy-nine people, including thirty technicians, left Peking for Lhasa and Shigatse to begin work. Their leader, Wang Tse-chang, spent an evening telling me how these new ventures were going ahead after five months' work on them.

Enough work had been done on the two rivers to prevent floods in both Shigatse and Lhasa, and several smaller rivers in Lhasa's suburbs had been regulated. This had enabled the Dalai Lama to travel more conveniently to Jewel Park from the Potala and the citizens had been very pleased to see this mark of respect to their leader.

"Lhasa can easily have 90,000 kw. of power from the Yangba River, but that is about forty-five miles away and that project will have to be tackled a little later," Wang said. "In the meantime, we have surveyed Lhasa for water to drive generators. As a temporary measure, we propose to move the present ancient generator to a new site and add three more generators to bring the total output for the city up to 660 kw. We are going ahead on plans for another site where we can get a further 1,000 kw. Later we shall start the big project. We have finished surveying for the Shigatse diesel power station and for a hydro-power station on the Nyang River."

Wang said that some Tibetan workers would be trained for the factories and power-stations in advance, but most of them would be trained on the job. At first a few Han technicians would be in charge to train workers to take over the whole enterprise as soon as possible.

"There is no Tibetan working class," said Wang. "There is no tradition of working for wages or even for payment." Nor are there any Tibetan technicians, scientists, mathematicians or experts in any field of modern industry. Even the Tibetan nobles who go to Chengtu and Peking to study can seldom write more than a few words when they arrive.

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Preparations for setting up the factories were well ahead, Wang said. "A deposit of about 2,000,000 tons of good iron ore has been found just near Lhasa. This will be used to start the iron foundry, and Tibet can then start to make her own farm tools and spare parts. This will take a load off the transport and allow space for other things." Iron is almost a precious metal in Tibet. Until recently 1 lb. of iron cost 3 lb. of cheese.

Wang had organised research into the cattle situation, and estimated that there were about 1,500,000 yaks, 500,000 other cattle and between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000 sheep. "At present about one hide in five is used, and the other four are either thrown away or used as packing material. Tanneries will make quite a difference to Tibetan purchasing power. If only a fraction of the wasted hides were turned into leather and exported, Tibet could buy far more consumer goods. The new tannery will go into production in 1956, and so will the ironworks. Naturally, such a tannery cannot process more than a very small proportion of the total hides available, but it will make a difference."

I asked him what the Tibetans felt about these new industrial projects. "Do they feel their religious ideas are being affronted?"

He smiled and answered: "They are very impatient; very keen to see them in operation. They want the power station finished before the end of 1956 and lights everywhere in less than no time. There has never been any scientific education here, so they just don't realise the complications involved in constructing an electric power system. They call us in Tibetan 'Capable Scientists' and want us to perform miracles."

Work on the dykes had been all done by the Tibetans, with the State Council paying the bill. The technicians only drew up the plans and advised on technical matters. But even here the work was all split into sections, each under a clerical and lay official, who organised the labour and materials. "We pay the wages of the workers," Wang said, "but we don't interfere in any way. Most of the workers have been women and they are very keen. They bring musical instruments and those wide planks they use for dancing and put on entertainments for us.

"We are very careful not to offend religious scruples. If there is a cairn of prayer-stones or a prayer-wall where we want to put an instrument, we work round it somehow."

"How about mining?" I asked. "Doesn't that bring up the religious question rather seriously?"

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"It hasn't cropped up yet," he replied. "When it does we shall have to see what the Tibetans think about it. I think there will be no problem. We always find that when the Tibetans know we are looking for minerals, they are keen to help us find them. In fact most of our finds up to now have been due to help from local people who have acted as our guides."

As I left Wang's office I was wondering what would be the Tibetan attitude to tannery workers. Butchers and the yak-skin boatmen are social pariahs because their work is associated with the death of animals. This even affects bootmakers. And I wondered where the workers would come from in Tibet, where people are tied to the land or the herds, where one man in four is a monk and tradition has the force of law.

Handicraftsmen also would not be free to enter factories. They work for the big monasteries and the nobles without pay or for subsistence. When they are not working for their overlords, they make up materials belonging to private customers, or, if they have some capital, make goods to sell. Normally a person who wants a set of silver teacup stands will give the necessary silver to the silversmith and pay a proportion of its weight as the fee for making. But such work must take second place to the needs of the artisan's overlord.

Shoemakers in Shigatse had to make boots each year for a regiment of soldiers, a job that took two months and for which they received half a day's wage and a handful of barley flour each day. When the county government wanted boots, they would pay only one-third of the market price. Wood-turners had to make bowls for the *dzongpons*, their housekeepers and orderlies and accept whatever fee might be offered as "charity". They also had to make whatever the temples ordered, free of charge.

There have been a few changes in the past four years. There is no longer any question in Shigatse of making boots for the army, because now the Panchen's troops have become a bodyguard regiment under the P.L.A. and are supplied by P.L.A. headquarters.

In 1955, when the wood-turners had to spend twenty days making tent-poles for the temples, they received about one-third of a silver dollar daily and some butter and tea. This was unheard of before and it did not occur because of any change in the law, but only due to the same change of social attitude that led to the reduction of interest payments.

These artisans have three years' training. Apprentice artisans are

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relatives or friends of artisans. On joining his master craftsman, the apprentice presents a ceremonial scarf, one sheep and a *tael* of silver. Then he goes to the temple with suitable gifts, and arranges for prayers. In his first year he works as a servant, does the most menial work, and his own family provides his food and lodging. In his second year he gets his board and does the heaviest work in the craft. In his third and last year he learns the trade and gets a little pay. At the end, he makes more presents and invites his master home for two days' feasting. Then he can work on his own within the limits of his feudal and guild ties. If he shows ability above the average, he will very likely be taken into the household of his overlord or into the monastery to work. Then he gets only his keep, no pay, and has no freedom to do outside work.

In that large part of the year when artisans who are not working for their masters are free to do other work, they sit and wait for someone to come along who wants something made. It was to get such people started in production that the People's Bank issued loans amounting to 175,000 silver dollars. Such artisans would probably sooner work for an assured wage than by borrowing capital and risking it in private production. For some time, perhaps, the question of manpower for Tibet's budding industries can be solved by employing "black" people and city folk living a hand-to-mouth existence on the fringe of society, who would certainly exchange it for a regular wage.

One of these is Jersi Tseren, who gets a precarious living making tassels, a common enough occupation in Lhasa among people who have no other way to make a living. These tassels, in bunches of three, are much used by country folk and muleteers for braiding into their long hair. If the wind is high the tassel and plait can also be passed over the brim to anchor the felt trilby hat.

Jersi Tseren, his wife, her sister and mother and Jersi's three children live in one room and an outhouse on the ground floor in one of Lhasa's poorest quarters. So little light creeps through the window opening in the thick wall that most of the room is dark even at noon. It is 10 feet by 10 feet, but I could not see what was in the darkest corner. In honour of my call, a brew of buttered tea was cooking on the yak-dung fire in a clay brazier and some china cups had been borrowed.

Jersi can read and write, being faintly connected with the nobility, and was for a time doing secretarial work for a merchant. "I was not clever and the pay was too low to live, less even than I can get making

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tassels," he said. "I had education, but no money. I had no way to buy a position or . . ." He used the picturesque Tibetan word for "bribe": "secret push".

His wife, a solid, plain woman who never stopped smiling throughout our talk, sat crossed-legged on a trestle which also served as a bed, and her handsome young sister sat with her back to another wall, both of them working at tassels with fast fingers as we talked, while the man sat nursing the youngest boy, aged one year. Jersi was a handsome, thin, honest-faced man of maybe thirty, with his hair coiled and braided round his head and the usual big circular earring swinging on a red thread to take its weight off the pierced lobe.

He said that the whole family could make five or six sets of tassels a day. Then they must be sold by hawking from house to house or by sitting on the ground in the market-place. Materials for a set of tassels cost half a silver dollar, and if they made six sets and sold them all at a good price, the family could earn 1 silver dollar in a day.

"On that we can just manage. But sometimes we have to sell at cost or just a little more, especially in the evening. I'm not very good at business," Jersi went on. His wife nodded. "Often we have no money, so I have to get materials on credit, and then we make them up fast and sell them to pay back before the interest eats the profit. Sometimes I use money from selling tassels made on credit to buy more materials. It gets very complicated and I have to sell cheap sometimes to pay back a creditor."

"My husband has stomach trouble," the woman said when I asked her what they usually ate. "We always try to get him good *tsamba* made from barley. The rest of us eat bean meal as a rule, and sometimes we can afford a few ounces of butter when we do well. But mostly its soup and *tsamba* with some tea. My husband has been going to the People's Hospital for a year for treatment and he seems to be getting better."

It took several hours to get their whole story and piece it together. Jersi belongs to the Sera Monastery and his wife and her mother belong to the Potala. Jersi married into his wife's family—that is, he is living in the room of his mother-in-law, which is rented for 1 silver dollar a year. By some ancient arrangement of commutation, Jersi pays 1½ coppers a year instead of doing labour service and his wife pays 5 coppers. The sister pays nothing because she is under eighteen, and the mother pays nothing because she is blind.

"My family was well-to-do," Jersi said, "and my brother knew

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some nobles, so I got some education. But it is hard to get a position when you have nothing to give. I have a wealthy relative who promised to help me a long time ago. He said he could get me a post as an official in a suburban area. When I called on him a year ago he told me: 'Yes, I can help you, but you must arrange a feast for two days and get yourself some better clothes.' The feast would have cost at least 600 dollars. The post would have been worth 20 bushels of rice and what I could make for myself. It was a bargain. But I could not borrow the money to entertain and so I had to let it pass."

I asked what the young woman would do when she became eighteen and due for feudal service. They said that was not very important, because her service could be commuted for very little money in Lhasa. "What we want to do is get her into a nunnery," the wife said.

The girl sat there, young and fresh, with long black plaits that would be shaved off. I asked her if she wanted to go into a nunnery and she nodded, but said nothing. Her sister answered for her: "She has seen what happened to me. If she marries it is too much of a burden when you have a poor husband and children come. Tibet has a bad custom about marriage. Suppose she married and had a child and then her husband left her. That happens often. Without money and influence, there is nothing you can do about it, and so a woman is left with a child to care for and no way to do it. It's better to be a nun and avoid that sort of thing."

There was one obvious question and I asked it: "Then why did you marry?"

She looked at her husband and smiled. "I thought: 'He can read and write, he is an educated fellow and ought to be able to get on all right.' He's an honest man. I suppose that's why I married him. Now look at the trouble I'm in. Three children and an old mother. I should have been a nun."

Her husband did not demur. He sat there with his face full of gentleness—an honest man. The room was full of inconsistencies: a family shrine of cheap images and a few little brass bowls filled with water, a big coloured print of Mao Tse-tung playing with some children, the wall papered with foreign illustrated papers, some upside-down, and on the chest of the would-be nun a badge with portraits of Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh.

I presented some gifts and prepared to leave. Jersi said: "I thank you very much for coming—such a high official as you—to such a humble

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home." I tried to explain that I was not an official, but his mother-in-law interrupted from the dark corner where she had sat silently blowing the yak-dung fire and keeping the tea hot. "Such things never happened before," she said, "foreigners visiting poor people. Imagine that! Things are changing. If you were sick, who would help you? Now my son can go to hospital for a whole year for nothing. Things like this never happened before."

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

DR. CHINROB AND THE PEOPLE'S HOSPITAL

Herbs and black magic—The sin of surgery—"The patient cannot die"—Anaesthesia—The new hospital—Soothsayers send patients—Monks study modern medicine—Miracles every day

JERSI'S medical treatment, which caused such strong reaction from his mother-in-law, was not an isolated case. Of all the innovations in Tibet during the past five years, modern medicine is so far the only one that has found a mass basis. All treatment is free in the People's Hospitals and each morning monks, nobles of both sexes and their servants, peasants, herdsmen and children of all sorts form a long queue outside the Out-patients' Department of the Lhasa Hospital, which stands where the old Manchu barracks used to be.

Strictly speaking, no Lamaist should have anything to do with modern medicine. Lamaism has its own system of medicine—a compound of ancient Chinese medicine, herbalism, religion and astrology. A Tibet doctor—they are all monks—is likely to give a wealthy patient a perfectly good stomach draught of herbs with tested efficacy and at the same time a pill containing the excrement of one of the Grand Lamas, all to be taken on an astrologically auspicious day. There was no medical service for the poor formerly. Those who could afford it paid a monk to pray when they were sick.

Most of the non-mystical parts of Tibetan medicine date back, as usual, to King Songtsan Gambo and his Chinese wife, Princess Wen Chang. *Djalama*, the Tibetan word for medicine, means "Han medicine", and the Tibetans owe to the Chinese their possession of such treatments as acupuncture[1] and moxibustion[2] and many other herbal remedies.

Such medical methods blended with Bon black magic and Lamaist philosophy to become Tibetan medicine as it is now and has been for hundreds of years.

Chinrob Nobo, a fat and jovial old monk, wrinkled and rheumaticky, but still with brawny hands and great forearms, is Tibet's

[1] Inserting extremely fine needles into various parts of the body to stimulate reactions.
[2] Stimulating the skin and tissues by heating the area with the glowing end of a herbal "cigar". (Both of these methods, long used empirically with success in China, are now being studied to reach a theoretical understanding of their functions.)

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leading doctor, trained in the School of Medicine on the rock facing the Potala and head of the Tibetan hospital, called Menzekang, in Lhasa. He is also the doctor of the Dalai Lama. No incongruity is seen in having a mortal doctor curing a Living God. The School of Medicine is about 300 years old, and the Menzekang was set up by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in the year of the Fire-Dragon, 1915. These are the only places in Tibet where monks are taught medicine.

Doctor Chinrob talked with me for the best part of a day, giving a very clear and thorough outline of the theory and practice of Tibetan medicine. We sat in a room hung with coloured charts and diagrams—human figures with great glaring eyes and internal organs indicated in unusual positions. Anatomy is not taught by dissection, but by these charts, which also show the supposed circulation of the blood on the right side of the body and the bile on the left. The heart of a woman is drawn in a different place from that of a man. One chart showed the whole process of conception and birth, starting from boy meeting girl, and another showed many very recognisable surgical instruments, including sigmoidoscopes and scalpels, which cannot be used because Lamaism does not permit operations. It is a sin to make a new opening in the human body.

While we sat talking, servants bustled round pouring sweet tea and passing biscuits and sugared cheese with very grimy hands. Noblemen in Tibet do not seem to mind their servants' hands being almost black and their clothes rank with dusty butter smoke when they serve guests. Chinrob Nobo walked with me along the charts, explaining them. First he called over a young monk who always hovered waiting; hoisted himself off the settee with the aid of the little cleric and a strong stick and leaning his weight on the staggering lad pointed out the meaning of the three pulses in each wrist, each said to come from a different organ, how the chemical balance of the human body is maintained and other illustrated tenets of Tibetan medicine.

There are about 500 monk doctors in Tibet, existing solely to serve the higher monks, nobility and army, and there is no other Tibetan medical service. It takes up to fifteen years of scholastic study to become a doctor, the most vital qualification being a photographic memory, for nine of those years at least are devoted to learning by heart the four books of the canons of Tibetan medicine. These have to be memorised so completely that the student can recite them by heart without error in a single day, and even continue the recitation from a single phrase picked at random by the examiner. Training also

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includes studying the pulses, testing urine by appearance, observing the eyes and diagnosing, under the supervision of a tutor. Another part of the training is in astrology, for it is useless to examine, prescribe, mix or take medicine at an inauspicious time.

Diagnosis begins with an investigation of the condition of the patient during the thirty-eight weeks which they calculate as the period in the womb. Astrology also enters in this. Then there are six methods of diagnosis: pulse, eye, ear, tongue, complexion and excreta. Everything depends on the doctor's knowledge of the books in order to diagnose what prayers should be said and what treatments prescribed. In this it is akin to the early medicine of the Greeks and medieval medicine.

"If a patient dies it is the doctor's fault," Chinrob Nobo explained. "Buddha is all-knowing and if a doctor thoroughly knows the scriptures and goes exactly according to the books, a patient cannot die. All medical knowledge is written in the books, and so if a patient dies the doctor is able to check his work and find out where he was wrong."

The first book of medicine was written about 2,000 years ago, the doctor said, by an incarnation of Shadje Turen, and enlarged by Udoyongden Gambo in the time of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. This doctor, having lived 125 years, became a Buddha.

Doctor Chinrob was reluctant to demonstrate the Tibetan way of pulse diagnosis. "It really is not the best time of day," he demurred. "It is best to feel the pulse in the morning, especially at dawn, and the best day is Monday." But he agreed to show me how it was done without promising an accurate diagnosis. I rolled up my sleeve and sat facing him with my left elbow on my knee and the back of my hand toward him as he carefully adjusted the first three fingers of his right hand on my wrist. He began counting, in silence, timing my pulses by his own breathing and gazing into my eyes with mild amusement. After a while he said that I had too much fire and too little water, which was more than a possibility after the big party that had been held on the previous night, where too many toasts had been drunk.

He explained that all creatures, animals and plants, were composed of five elements—metal, wood, water, fire and earth, in that order—and each element was stronger than the succeeding one. The main principle was to keep the elements balanced, because if a person lacked fire, the fire could not force the water to do its bidding and so on. A man would generally lack fire in old age. If a person lacked metal he

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would be short and weak, crook-legged, big-headed or goitrous, but fire could be added by using herbs from the sunny side of mountains, by hot-water bottles and such methods.

Could they diagnose appendicitis, I asked. Yes, he said, and in most cases could cure chronic appendicitis. There was no cure for acute cases, which are about 10 per cent. of cases, and this is regarded as a reasonable mortality rate from this ailment.

Doctor Chinrob called over the small boy again and, leaning heavily, showed me round the hospital pharmacy, where there are 6,000 or so different herbs from all parts of Asia. On the way I found out that contraception is illegal in Tibet and rhinoceros horn a specific for tuberculosis; that mercury has been used for many years in syphilis treatment and that anaesthesia has been known in Tibet for, as Doctor Chrinrob said, 2,000 years.

This Tibetan anaesthetic (perhaps the same that Juliet used) comes from the roots of a tree called tatura, which is very common in the virgin forests of Bomi. It has to be used with extreme care by an experienced person and can produce complete anaesthesia lasting up to twelve hours. Dosage is estimated on the body weight, age and general health of the patient. Tatura is used for the only operations permitted by Lamaism—amputation—but this also is seldom done, because of the lack of proper instruments.

All medicines must be prepared at the time of the waxing moon, for then the patient's health will wax also; but if it is necessary to prepare them at another time, this must be on an auspicious day according to the Tibetan calendar, which is based on the assumption that the earth is flat and divided according to the revolutions of the moon.

One thought had been buzzing in my head during the talk, and now I asked it: "Since it is the fault of a doctor when a patient dies, either because he did not know the scriptures or misinterpreted them, is he punished?"

Doctor Chinrob cocked a wise eye at me and replied: "If the doctor's intentions were honourable, he would not be considered punishable. It is human to err. But if the intention is criminal, he would be punished according to the law. Anything that is bad for the patient is forbidden by the scriptures. That is the law of Songtsan Gambo."

In medicine, as in everything else, there is intense mental upheaval as the old ideas meet the new, and only time can decide how this will be resolved. I asked Doctor Chinrob what they do about pneumonia in

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Tibet, because this disease is one of the worst killers, owing to the lack of oxygen in the air. He said that they now sometimes prescribe aureomycin. And three monk doctors are now studying at the People's Hospital on a three-year course, mainly in surgery and venereal disease. Tibetan doctors feel that they know all there is to know about internal medicine, but may have something to learn about surgery.

The People's Hospital where they are studying is a big collection of new adobe buildings, whitewashed outside and lined inside with white cotton cloth. Part of it is an old two-storey Tibetan house with an open gallery running round inside a courtyard. Shaggy-haired nomads wait their turn with gorgeously dressed nobles, grimy, barefooted servant monks may be in the queue ahead of monk officials in soft garnet cashmere. Pretty, confident nurses, crackling in stiff white, trip smiling round the corridors, passing a word in Tibetan with waiting patients.

On an ordinary day 500 patients attend the Out-patients' Department in Lhasa, and when the town is crowded with pilgrims during some religious festival the daily O.P.D. figure goes up to 1,000. It is convenient for pilgrims, the hospital being only a few paces from the Lingkor, the five-mile holy circuit that embraces Lhasa.

"Even the soothsayers on the Lingkor are now advising their customers to patronise the hospital," its Chief Medical Officer, Jen Hua-li, told me when I went there to check how my blood was reacting to the high altitude. "They charge the usual fee and draw lots as usual, but they say: 'It is an auspicious day to go to the People's Hospital.' "

Doctor Jen now heads a staff of 150, including twenty-two doctors, seventeen assistants, twenty nurses, seven midwives, seven pharmacists, four laboratory workers, three X-ray operators and several dentists. Like all the other organisations from Peking, they began work in tents and used their packing cases for furniture. Now it is a real hospital with entirely modern operating theatres and X-ray rooms equipped with up-to-date German and Soviet instruments, and its own generator which makes it independent of the quaking, old water-driven generator out in the hills.

One of the monk students from Doctor Chinrob's establishment is working in the Skin and Venereal Department, for venereal disease is one of Tibet's scourges, and some estimates put the incidence as high as 80 per cent. Sonam Dingje looked up from a microscope as Doctor Jen showed me into the room. He was wearing a white smock over his

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priestly robes. Tibetan medicine, he told me, had long made use of mercury as a treatment for syphilis. It was swallowed as a white powder and the mouth had to be kept open for one hour afterwards, otherwise the teeth all came out. After a time the chancre would dry and fall off and the patient was pronounced cured. Nothing was known of the secondary and tertiary stages of the disease.

"I like studying here," he said. "It's big and well-equipped and I am studying theory and practice. I can now take blood for analysis, make injections, treat ulcers, judge the stages of syphilis and treat it according to stage. Now I'm beginning to study bacteriology. It's very exciting."

Another of these monks, Rinchen Pintso, is studying surgery. He said he had seen cases of people with internal injuries who were simply prescribed rest in the Tibetan hospital and died as a result of the rule that it was sinful to make a new opening in the human body.

"In three years of practice I never cut anything, even a boil," he said. "The first time I ever saw inside a human abdomen was here, when I helped in my first operation for appendicitis. We never dissected a corpse."

To complete the picture, I visited the School of Medicine, second of Lhasa's famous landmarks, on the sharp cone of rock called the Iron Hill that tops even the Potala's golden roofs. Fortunately, it is a school and not a hospital, the climb up its steep paths being more than enough for a healthy man.

This heart of Tibetan medicine is actually a temple, whose name means "Salvation of the People", though its actual role is only to train doctors for high monks and officials who live in Lhasa. Doctors for the provinces are trained in Chinrob Nobo's hospital.

In the assembly room where sixty-four students study the scriptures the same medical charts of 1,000 or more years ago are hanging. In the chapel sits a blue-faced image of Thangtong Gyalpo, who is credited with having introduced chain bridges and yak-skin boats into Tibet and also with having devised the Tibetan opera form. From the roof of that chapel, the highest point in Lhasa, enormous horns, 12 feet long, are blown three times every month to the God of Victory. The din they make is awful, starting like the rattle of sub-machine-gun fire and developing to a deep booming roar that clatters round the mountains.

From this scholastic abode of medicine, where never a patient is seen, the white buildings of the People's Hospital are visible far below, beyond the hovels of a little beggars' village, always with a queue of

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patients. Usually there are some nobles, their horses held by red-hatted servants while the masters and mistresses go for the treatment that is free to everyone.

Disease—the issue of life and death—may be regarded by Lamaism as unimportant philosophically, but it becomes an urgent personal matter to those who are sick. Monks, who should be the last to attend the hospitals, are actually the first, and if that were not so the public would not go either. But when the people see their own red-robed mentors going to the People's Hospital, then it is really a case of "Physician heal thyself".

The efficacy of penicillin and the other antibiotics, of vaccination, rabies anti-toxin, X-rays, eye operations, dental treatment and surgery generally cannot be disputed. Nobody seems to want to dispute it. Monks and others with cataracts which years of prayer have not cured walk away with their sight restored; the lame walk and the sterile become fruitful. These are miracles, but they are happening to people themselves and not to legendary figures.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE FIRST SCHOOLS

Perfect manners and football—Nobles and serfs get free tuition—Too many applicants—The man with a wart—Practice convinces—No discipline—The tolerance of youth

FROM eleven o'clock to twelve noon every day the wireless telephone in Lhasa's little new Post Office is open for calls to any part of China. During that hour there are always several women in long gowns of best English worsted, colourful aprons and silk blouses, the whole topped by a big grey felt trilby hat, waiting to telephone Kangting, Chengtu or Peking, where their children, brothers or sisters are studying.

Such students are an essential link in Tibet's advance. Any step away from the present elementary production methods in Tibet runs straight into the problem of education: non-existent in Tibet except in a purely religious form. There are educated monks, highly competent in the complexities of Lamaism and Tibetan politics; there are nobles and merchants, educated half by monks and half by going to English-style schools in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, who speak excellent English, sit for Senior Cambridge and go back to merchandising or their official sinecures. Tibet's basic production on the land and pastures goes on without their assistance, and for the serfs and artisans there has never been any education of any sort.

As a result of an arrangement made by Sir Charles Bell with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1921, there was a school in Gyantse for a few years, with an English headmaster named Ludlow. Chapman wrote[1] of this that "owing to lack of support, the school was abandoned in 1926, much to Ludlow's disappointment. We met several old boys of the Gyantse School and found they spoke English extremely well, had perfect manners, and a fair knowledge of the game of football."

A school opened in Lhasa by the Kuomintang also failed for lack of support. But there was no sign of lack of interest in education at the new Lhasa Primary School, and no doubt this was partly because the three joint Presidents of the school were all Tibetans—the Dalai Lama's teacher, Living Buddha Trichang; Doka Kalon, who is also

[1] *Lhasa: The Holy City.*

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Vice-Commander of the P.L.A. headquarters in Tibet; and a member of the Dalai Lama's Secretariat, Tuden Khenchun.

At playtime the school playground is packed with about 700 yelling, whooping young Tibetans, whose ages vary between six years and the early twenties, sending out that deafening, high-pitched roar that a school at play always makes. Then there is silence and a shuffling of feet as they go in crocodiles to class, and from each classroom a mumbling as the children pray to Djam Beyan, the God of Wisdom, asking him to open their minds to learning.

The mixed classes of boys and girls sit on thick poufs without desks, because the Tibetan language may not be written on a table, but only on the knees—a mark of respect to the language in which the scriptures are written. But the lessons that they chant are multiplication tables, geography, general knowledge, music and art, subjects never previously taught in Tibet, and all lessons are in the Tibetan language, unlike those in the former schools, which failed for lack of support. Teachers walk round and look over the children's shoulders, having also the never-finished task of sharpening bamboo pens with their sheath knives as Nicholas Nickleby did for Miss Squeers. Writing is done on smooth wooden boards with ink made by mixing soot from the inevitable yak-dung with water. The writing can be washed off after each lesson, which is necessary because there is no paper industry and the handicraft paper of Tibet is so rough that a pen trips and splutters as if writing on canvas.

Little boys and girls sit in the lower classes with tall youths in their late teens. About two-thirds of the students are from the homes of commoners and have to start on the first rung of the educational ladder, whatever their ages. But the teachers are, and could only be at present, from the nobility and monasteries. Outside the classrooms, women servants who bring the younger children of well-to-do families to school wait all day until their charges are ready to go home.

Here, from their earliest years, the children of the aristocracy now sit side by side with the children of the serfs, children in costly silk with children in homespun, which is only possible because tuition is free to all. Where a child represents an indispensable part of a poor family's labour power, a subsidy is paid to compensate for this. Out of the 732 pupils last year, 124 were drawing these subsidies, and a further nine pupils were living in the school and entirely at its expense. Recalling the sad fate of the former secular schools, I asked the Khenchun Tuden whether this school was likely to fail for lack of support.

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"We should have fewer worries if the demand were smaller or if we could double our size," he answered. "We get twice as many applications as we can cope with. At present we have 380 boys and 352 girls and we could double the number tomorrow if we could find more staff. This year 700 young people sat for the entrance examination for our six-year course. This is primarily an examination for health rather than knowledge, but if children have had previous education we test that too, because it helps us to know whether they will study seriously. We had space for 360 pupils and had to turn down the rest. It is most worrying to have to reject young people who want to learn, but until we can expand there is no other way. Our method of selection is mainly by taking the older applicants and letting the younger ones wait their turn."

All expenses for this school are borne by the Peking authorities. It is the biggest of twenty-seven new schools in Tibet which are run on these lines. In addition to its three Tibetan Presidents, and two Tibetan Vice-Presidents (including Djen Lojen, who seems to have a finger in every cultural pie), leading monks from each of the three "Pillars of State", the great Lhasa monasteries, help to arrange the curriculum. Religion is not a subject, but all Tibetan literature is religious and the study of the Tibetan language, history and the biographies of the Dalai Lamas is strongly religious in content. Wages of the nineteen teachers are from 100 to 200 silver dollars monthly, paid by the central authorities.

No students have graduated yet. "After graduation," Tuden Khenchun explained, "they may do as they please. No conditions are attached to their entry here, no subject is compulsory, and the sole purpose of these schools is to make a start at raising the general level of education in Tibet."

About half a mile from the Primary School, across a clear stream and through a sunlit wood, is a quite different type of school, the Lhasa College of Social Education, which has its twin in Shigatse. Every weekday young people from the age of about fourteen upwards converge on the big Tibetan house in the copses east of the city, many of them tall, stately girls in their late teens, others tall young men, some riding motor-cycles to school, and all but a handful aristocrats or the children of merchants.

Its Tibetan director, Sonam Bamba, told me that the College is run on very free and informal lines: students can choose how many courses to attend and how often to attend them. It started in 1952, he

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said, mainly to help Tibetan teachers to improve their knowledge of the Tibetan language, to learn the Han language if they wished and familiarise themselves with the history of Tibet. Young people in the city with time on their hands heard about the informal classes under the trees—there were no classrooms or textbooks then—and asked to be allowed to attend. "So we had to move indoors and go over to a permanent basis," Sonam continued. "We grade the pupils according to educational level, not age, and have both Tibetan and Han teachers—well, not really teachers; they act as advisers in study. We have two herdsmen, a few peasants, some artisans' children, and the rest of the pupils are about equally divided between children of merchants and aristocrats. In 1954 and 1955 we sent a total of eighty students to Peking and Chengtu for more advanced education.

"Apart from the course on the Han language, all classes are taken in Tibetan, even when Hans teach," he said as we went from class to class, and he pointed to a young P.L.A. soldier taking a class in simple arithmetic in the Tibetan language. Other classes include "general knowledge" (which is a very important subject in Tibet), music, physical training and hygiene, and politics.

"Political study is voluntary, like all the rest," Sonam said when I queried what this course included. "Mostly it consists of studying the text and meaning of the various agreements which Tibet has signed, especially the 1951 agreement between our local government and the Central People's Government; the policy of the Chinese Communist Party towards religion and national minority peoples, the text of the Chinese Constitution and so on."

On my way back through the woods I saw a group of perhaps forty men and girls of the Chinese army sitting under the trees and a tall Tibetan in a trilby hat standing facing them, teaching the Tibetan language. This is one of the by-products of the College of Social Education, providing tutors for the P.L.A. on an exchange basis. All Hans working in Tibet have to learn and use the Tibetan language. It helps to prevent what they call "Big Hanism", and it also shows the Tibetan people that their language is respected. One reason for the popularity of the new educational institutes is their entirely Tibetan character.

While the primary schools and these more advanced colleges give a general education for anyone who cares to or is able to accept it, the National Minorities Institutes in Kangting, Chengtu and Peking specialise in preparing young Tibetans to play some part in developing

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Tibet on modern lines, preparing for the days of improved farming, livestock breeding and industry. Up to the end of 1955 about 1,000 Tibetans had joined these institutes, mostly the children of clan leaders and other nobility, but including also a fair proportion of commoners, serfs, herdsmen, "black folk" and others who have come into contact with and worked for the P.L.A. As in the case of the other schools, only noblemen are entirely free to send their children to study at these institutes. Others gravitate into them by a process of accidental selection. Jume Bajang, whom I described in Chapter Four, was typical of this sort: young, not yet enveloped in family and feudal ties and conservatism, and willing to go along new paths. By the time she had worked for wages on transport and building the new road she had seen more than enough to convince her that there could be no going back to her native valley, there to make a precarious living out of a few head of cattle, and she volunteered to work for the Women's Association in her district, popularising the new clinics and veterinary teams.

"But the work soon got too much for me," she said. "There were cattle epidemics and relief work, distributing government loans, allocating free iron tools, organising people to increase their production and setting up sales organisations. The nomads did some weaving, but they wasted a lot of their time selling what they made. So part of my work was to organise them to co-operate in producing carpets and cloth and setting up a central selling agency. Then we got the peasants together on irrigation work that they could not tackle individually, to prevent the loss of crops in dry times.

"It just got too much for me to remember everything, and work became impossible. I drew people and things in my notebook to help me remember—a man with a wart on his nose and a bag of grain beside him, and such things. But I kept getting into a muddle and the work suffered. So I asked if I could go and study."

Quite a different type was Ladjo Teren, a petty noble, leader of his clan at the age of fifteen when his father was killed at his side during a clan battle, and his elder brother died in his arms later the same night. Ladjo was twenty-one when I met him in Chengtu, tall and dark with a long, curved nose and strong mouth, already a man of presence and power. He described the isolation of his clan's pasture-lands in Dinjin, 1,000 miles from Lhasa, where the sword and gun had been the only law for centuries.

"For a long time our whole region had been terrorised by Djendu, leader of the Djendu clan," Ladjo said. "His gang killed my father and

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brother and three other kinsmen that night. He had about twenty followers with fast horses and fine rifles and they made sudden raids in strength, stealing cattle and driving them off.

"When the P.L.A. came they called the clan leaders together and suggested that it was time to make agreements to settle the grazing rights and put an end to feuding. Djendu was there and signed the agreement, but he had no intention of keeping it. He waited till the P.L.A. had moved forward and then attacked again. It was the same as before, we had no peace at all, and finally several clans had a meeting and asked the P.L.A. to help us destroy his gang.

"We were very glad to see the P.L.A. come back—seventy mounted men and well armed. Even Djendu's own clan was against him because when he robbed and killed, people took revenge on other members of his clan. It was a fellow clan member of his who told the P.L.A. the way to their hideout, and we all went to surround the place at night. They fought to the last man, and we carried their corpses back and took them to their homes among the Djendu clan so that everyone could see they were dead. Djendu's clan is still there with a different leader and we live in peace."

Ladjo, fearless, young and without bigotry, had played a leading part, despite his age, in the negotiations over clan grazing rights, and had shown willingness to compromise as well as stubbornness to assert his clan's rights. When the P.L.A. suggested he should go inland to Chengtu for study, his clan agreed. "By this time we had seen that these Hans were not the same as the old lot. They paid for all transport and gave us free medical care," Ladjo commented. "Now I am studying how to improve our livestock and help the whole clan."

All Tibetans who study at the Institute for National Minorities learn something about scientific methods as applied to agriculture and livestock farming—the two great branches of Tibetan economy. Lessons in the class-room are supplemented by visits to State farms, veterinary stations and by the use of films and lantern slides.

"But the most important thing is to let them do things themselves." said Liu Chung-liang, Vice-President of the Chengtu Institute, during a talk I had with the faculty. "If they grow things themselves twice as well by scientific methods as by their own traditional ways, this really convinces them. For example, the Tibetans do not manure very thoroughly, and instead of sowing the seeds in line they scatter them and do not bother about weeding. It's no use our saying that such

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methods are wrong when they have been using them for centuries. We select two fields of equal quality and let them test both ways and see exactly what the difference is to the crop. After that, of course, they are willing to take more on trust, but still we always rely very much on practical demonstrations, because as yet there is little tradition of abstract scientific thinking. Also we do not insist on insecticides, because that involves the religious beliefs of the students. It's for the Tibetans themselves to decide whether they want to use such things. We don't push our ideas down their throats, and we respect Tibetan customs, even to the extent of getting yak butter here from Tibet."

And not only yak butter. I had seen Tibetan-style cottage cheese called *chura*, hard as a bullet and strung in square blocks like beads, and real *tsamba* made from the hard-shelled Tibetan mountain barley, which all Tibetans prefer to any other grain. Apart from the mugginess of the lowlands, they live exactly as though they were on their native plateau. To such lengths is the respect for national minorities carried in these institutes that no action is taken against any student by the school authorities. Discipline is entirely left to a committee elected by the students themselves, and probably constitutes their first experience of using the vote.

Students find the visit to China an education in itself. After I came back from the plateau I met a young aristocrat from Shigatse in a Peking restaurant and we talked about Tibet and its future. He said: "When I left Shigatse and saw Lhasa and the Potala I thought that no city could be more splendid. Then I got to Chengtu and thought: 'Surely this is the world's greatest city.' Then I got on a train and went to Chungking and saw the funiculars going straight uphill. This I found most interesting. You see, we in Tibet look on the hills and mountains as our enemies. It seemed to me that Tibet could not be developed because of the mountains. But there was Chungking, built entirely on mountains, although China has plenty of flat land. I found that most encouraging. Then I came to Peking and passed through all of China. Then I could see we were part of a big thing."

In Lhasa, the man whose job it is to develop the training of Tibetans for every sort of job in administration, medicine, farming, banking and industry is Pai Yung-lung. "The policy of the People's Government is to train as many Tibetans as possible and promote them without reserve. I mean, without reserve," he stressed. "By 1957 we hope that there will be 3,000 Tibetans at least in various branches of the new work. At this moment we have only 426. We don't want too many

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Hans coming here, because that would impede the freest possible promotion of Tibetan people to every side of the work.

"We know that what we have done so far is entirely inadequate, but it is a start," he went on. "As more people are trained and more people find out that we mean what we say—that we regard Tibetans as equals and have no intention of interfering with their customs or traditions—the enrolments into training classes and institutes will increase and go on increasing. Tibet has a long history of culture, and this provides a firm basē for swift advance."

Swift it certainly is for young people who never saw a wheel and now are making model aircraft. Young Tibetans are no less filled with youthful longings for adventure and intolerance of elderly conservatism than young people everywhere. But how swift for Tibetan society as a whole, embedded in monasteries and feudalism?

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

WHAT NEXT IN TIBET?

Mystery no longer—Self-government and reform—Aristocrats and living standards—The way ahead

IT is hard to leave Lhasa. In late October when the time came to say goodbye to so many gracious, unhurried people who had now become old friends, the sunshine seemed lighter and cooler, but massed flowers still gave an air of spring to belie the gold of barley being harvested and gleaned in that glorious valley. The white road twisted along the mountains until backward-straining eyes caught their last glimpse of the Potala's red façade and golden roofs and only the memory was left.

Cicadas still sang in the trees of Bomi: the swifts had not migrated, and though it was late autumn on the lower peaks it was still summer in the valleys. Now the snow-line had crept down and the high passes which when we travelled west were bare stone or grass now lay deep in winter snow. We travelled from summer to winter several times a day. In the months since August the road had been widened and smoothed, curves straightened and bridges improved. Steady streams of lorries passed with drivers cheerfully greeting each other.

We neither dawdled nor hurried, taking ten days exactly on the journey from Lhasa to Chengtu—an average of 150 miles a day. Going up Chu La, the sun shone at first, but as we left the trees a blizzard blanketed the peak and we had to feel our way over. We crept along gorges on the edge of precipices in wet, driving snow that clogged the windshield-wipers and filled the whole world with white, hiding the edge of the road from the drivers' straining eyes as convoys inched past each other. Once over Erh Lang Mountain and down again to sea-level, there was the permanent green of Szechuan's lush farmland and bamboo groves. Twelve days after leaving Lhasa I was in Peking, burned black by the sun and wind.

In the foregoing chapters I have tried to set down factually what I saw and heard in Tibet—the good and the bad, the old and the new, the problems, failures and successes—so that readers might draw their own conclusions. I have tried to let the facts speak for themselves, but

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where I thought it helpful to understanding of the problems I have quoted what others have written about them. It must already be clear that Tibet is no longer a "Land of Mystery", if indeed it ever was. The remoteness that made Tibet mysterious to western people has gone, and now you can take a bus from Lhasa over 1,500 miles and many mountains to Chengtu. Soon a railway will link Lhasa with Warsaw, Prague, Paris and London. Before that time, civil aircraft will be dropping into that fabulous valley where the Dalai Lama lives. Tibet is not *Out of This World*, as Lowell Thomas titled his book, but very much in this world, though perhaps not in the world of Lowell Thomas.

Previous accounts of Tibet were written when most of Asia was colonial and were written largely by people whose aim was to help Britain detach Tibet from China. It was because of this that the Dalai and Panchen Lamas both urged me to put the record straight and to correct some of the misapprehensions that have been fostered. Both the Grand Lamas reasserted that Tibet was formerly and is now part of China, and indeed nobody dreamed of denying this fact even when British troops marched into Lhasa or at the time of the abortive agreement between Britain, China and Tibet at Simla in 1913. When Younghusband invaded Tibet in 1904, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama first appealed to Peking for help, but none was forthcoming from the corrupt Manchu régime and none came later from the still more corrupt Kuomintang. In consequence, Tibet fell more and more under British influence. But though Britain was arming and training Tibet's small army, garrisoning the caravan route and trying to teach a handful of young Tibetans how to be pukka English public schoolboys, a representative of the Chinese government remained in Lhasa, and after the Second World War the allies reiterated that Tibet was part of China.

And when it came to the cross-roads, Tibet refused to join the sad company of America's "free and independent" Asian puppets, then being marshalled for an attempt to reverse the recent history of China, and restored the centuries-old relationships with China by the 1951 agreement.

One result of the agreement was that hundreds of Tibetan leaders, including both the Grand Lamas, visited China and toured the new construction sites, visited temples and talked to religious personalities. Lamaist temples in many parts of China now display as precious possessions the *hatas* hung on their gods by the Dalai and Panchen.

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Some visiting Tibetans went to Korea and saw at first hand the results of American "protection". One of these, the Lama Director of the Lhasa Mint, told me how strongly he had been impressed by seeing the bomb havoc in Korea and the strength China had displayed there. Both the Grand Lamas and their followers returned to Tibet convinced of two important things: the reality of religious freedom in China, and China's ability to develop rapidly as an independent industrial country.

Since then both the Grand Lamas have asserted many times that Tibet will become socialist together with the rest of China. The question is: How? How does a social system that has remained almost static for 1,000 years make such an enormous change?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama made some comments on this question in a speech he made on April 24, 1956, during a conference in Lhasa on Tibetan autonomy. The Dalai Lama said:

> "Socialism means a truly happy society and Tibet will take no other road. Tibet is at present a long way from socialism. We have to carry out reforms gradually. When to carry out reforms and what those reforms should be depend on how the work develops and various practical circumstances. It will be done through consultation by the leaders of Tibet and the mass of the people."

By chance I was in Lhasa when a meeting was held to set up an office to prepare the way for Tibetan self-government. It was dazzling. Lay leaders of the three separate areas of Tibet were present in brilliant robes, wearing the golden *gao* of high officials between their top-knot and six-inch gold and turquoise earrings. Compared with them, the rows of aristocratic women delegates looked almost drab in spite of their many-coloured aprons and silk blouses. Abbots of the "Big Three" monasteries were present and voted with the rest for unifying Tibet as an autonomous region of the Chinese People's Republic.

This meeting paved the way for the creation of a Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet at the conference which began on April 22, 1956. The Dalai Lama, who on that occasion made the remarks quoted above, became Chairman of the Committee, with the Panchen Lama as First Vice-Chairman, and a Han, Chang Kuo-hua, as Second Vice-Chairman. Chang Kuo-hua announced to the conference what he described as "the established policy of the Central People's Government on the question of reforms in Tibet". He said:

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"The Tibetan region differs greatly, socially and economically, from the areas of the Han people and other minority nationalities. The measures to be taken in future to carry out reforms in the Tibetan region must also be different from those adopted in other areas.

"According to the instructions of the Central People's Government, future reforms in the Tibetan region must be carried out from the upper to the lower levels and by peaceful consultation, in accordance with the will and desire of the majority of the Tibetan people.

"During and after reforms, the Government must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the political status and living conditions of the upper class Tibetan people (including upper class ecclesiastics) will not be reduced but will possibly be raised.

"That is to say: changes can only be for the better and not for the worse.

"This method is to the advantage of the aristocracy and of the monasteries and also of the people.

"After future reforms in Tibet, the religious beliefs of the people can remain completely unchanged."

Speaking at the same meeting, Chinese Vice-Premier Chen Yi said: "The Communist Party of China and the Central People's Government hold that reforms in Tibet can only be carried out when the Tibetan leaders and people unanimously demand them and are determined on them. They can never be carried out by any other nationality."

The April Conference took the first step toward Tibetan self-government, and the remarks quoted above established certain principles for carrying out reforms there. But the question remained: how can Tibet transform itself into a socialist society with the rest of China—that is, within twelve years? Nobody attempted to answer that question, but it would be an abdication of this book's task if it did not try to provide as much of that answer as seemed inherent in what I saw and heard on the Tibetan plateau.

The aim of reform from above to below, leaving the present upper class with as high or higher living standards; protecting religious freedom and the status of the upper monastic and lay classes who rule Tibet, appears to be self-contradictory, and indeed would be so if there were no change in the productive methods.

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Socialism, if the word is to have meaning, requires in Tibet the social ownership of the basic means of production: the land and herds now owned by the monasteries, the nobility and the local governments created by their partnership. Any appreciable increase in production can only be got by freeing the land and land workers, herds and herdsmen, from their present primitive relationships of production and enabling democracy and technique to develop and an industrial working class to emerge from among the commoners who are now tied to the land and subject to their individual overlords.

Without increasing agricultural production and developing industry, there would be no way to raise the standards of life of the common people except at the expense of the nobles and monasteries. There is no way out but to grow more grain and meat, develop industry and raise the living standards of all.

Therefore the reform of the feudal system of herd and land ownership will have to be carried out, by and with the agreement of the clerical and lay aristocracy, who are themselves the land- and herd-owners, and without lowering their conditions of life. Land and herd reform are essential to any fundamental advance in Tibet.

In fact, to raise the living standards of the Tibetan people while maintaining and actually raising those of the nobles and monks does not present such a serious problem as might appear or as it might do if the Tibetan rulers enjoyed the living standards of their counterparts in the West. Wealthy Tibetans would not be regarded as wealthy by modern standards elsewhere. Tibet's productivity is so low and her potential productivity so high that any general improvement in agricultural and pastoral methods of production would provide an enormous margin to raise everyone's living standards.

Nor is it only a question of income; all Tibetans suffer from the lack of social services. Until the new hospitals arrived, no amount of money could save the life of a person suffering from such easily curable but fatal illnesses as pneumonia or acute appendicitis. Only a tiny handful of the richest Tibetans have been able to provide their children with any education other than the scriptures.

The forward-looking aristocrat is now regarding things in a new light. He cannot fail to when he sees that the wages paid to a schoolteacher, administrator or public worker by the central authorities are in many cases greater than the income from a vast estate. A man with an income of 200 silver dollars a month would be reckoned wealthy in Tibet, yet this is the wage, paid from Peking, of a teacher in the Lhasa

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Primary School. As Tibet develops there will be thousands of openings for doctors, agronomists, veterinary specialists and technicians of every sort. Any noble member of the rising generation can expect to make a better living in the sphere of hydro-electric power than his father ever made from the private ownership of a large estate, managed in the primitive style of old Tibet. It is a fact of considerable significance that Ngabou Kalon, who played a leading part in the 1951 negotiations and the recent moves for Tibetan autonomy, has five of his children studying in the Peking Institute for National Minorities. It is certainly possible to transform Tibet's outworn economic structure while raising the living standards of all—rich and poor alike.

But if that is to be done in twelve years and not in several centuries, very considerable financial, technical and other help is needed from the Chinese Government. The developments that have taken place so far have been on a small scale, tentative and experimental. No major reform was possible until the road had been built and the Tibetans had achieved a form of self-government suited to the situation and their relations with the central authorities. The hospitals, schools, experimental farms, Lhasa serum factory, veterinary work, agricultural loans, free gifts of iron farm tools and advantageous trading policies point the way ahead, but they have not yet dug below the surface—except perhaps in the case of medicine. Help was limited while Tibet was split into three areas, and is still limited by transport difficulties, because in the absence of motor spirit produced in Tibet the lorries drink up a good deal of their cargo weight in petrol on the stupendous journey over the plateau. That problem will be solved by building a railway.

Once there is an autonomous government representing all the politically articulate sections of Tibetans—and that will be very soon—it can plan the development of Tibet side by side with China's national plan and with the target of socialism. Any such plan must include the land reform, developing Tibet's agriculture and stock-breeding, creating an industry and providing a full educational and cultural life for the people. Once the land and herd reforms are carried out, productive efficiency can be raised and the Tibetan people can create their own working class and their own conditions for developing industry.

Tibetans are among the most hard-working people of the world and the Potala Palace is one of its wonders, testifying to the skill of the Tibetan people. That skill can again find an outlet in a new upward

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swing comparable with what happened in the heroic era of King Songtsan Gambo and the T'ang Dynasty. Tibet's young people, lacking the conservatism of their elders, are jubilant at joining the age of machines and aircraft. "Tibet cannot get very far on a yak," one young noble said to me in a Peking café. Young people in Tibet, especially children of wealthy people, who are more articulate, are clamouring to go to Peking and Chengtu to study, and young commoners are finding ways to go in increasing numbers. "When they come back they are not going to be content with things as they are," one old monk said wistfully.

Already in Tibet cloth, tea and manufactured goods are selling at a fraction of their former prices, while Tibetans are getting more money for their own goods, which China needs. There are new towns where only black nomads' tents were seen before. Old towns are getting modern health services, theatres, schools and houses.

Later there will be farming by modern methods, an enormous increase in production. Electrically powered factories will process far bigger, scientifically bred herds, and tinned yak-meat will appear on tables in the west. A railway manned by Tibet's new industrial working class—as Mongolians are manning their own railway through Ulan Bator—will speed up transport and the development of industry and trade. Class relations will change, but not as ever before in history. As young Tibetans have made the transition from horseback to the aeroplane without ever having seen a cart, so Tibetan society will pass directly from feudalism to socialism without passing through a period of capitalism.

Speculation can lead anywhere. Will there be, as one of the infinite possibilities of social transition, a socialist Tibet led by an alliance of monks, nobles and representatives of the labouring people? I found nobody on the Tibetan plateau willing to hazard answers to such questions. Up there the view is that, rather than seeking copy-book solutions, the prime need is to help Tibet to maintain and quicken the already-begun developments that everyone can agree are good because they help to expand production and make life better. This will provide a sound basis of better living, longer life and mass education, on which the Tibetan people will find their own way to democratic progress under the impulsion of a rising economy. Tibet's unique social system with its antique history and deep-cut traditions will long be reflected in the future. As to how—life will prove richer and more apt than speculation.

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APPENDIX I

THE CHINESE-TIBETAN AGREEMENT OF MAY 23, 1951

Text of "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" as issued by the *New China News Agency* on May 27, 1951

THE Tibetan nationality is one of the nationalities with a long history within the boundaries of China and, like many other nationalities, it has done its glorious duty in the course of the creation and development of the great motherland. But over the last 100 years or more, imperialist forces penetrated into China, and in consequence also penetrated into the Tibetan region and carried out all kinds of deceptions and provocations. Like previous reactionary governments, the Kuomintang reactionary government continued to carry out a policy of oppressing and sowing dissension among the nationalities, causing division and disunity among the Tibetan people. And the Local Government of Tibet did not oppose the imperialist deception and provocations, and adopted an unpatriotic attitude towards the great motherland. Under such conditions, the Tibetan nationality and people were plunged into the depths of enslavement and sufferings. In 1949, basic victory was achieved on a nation-wide scale in the Chinese People's War of Liberation; the common domestic enemy of all nationalities—the Kuomintang reactionary government—was overthrown; and the common foreign enemy of all nationalities—the aggressive imperialist forces—driven out. On this basis, the founding of the People's Republic of China and of the Central People's Government was announced. In accordance with the Common Programme passed by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Central People's Government declared that all nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal, and that they shall establish unity and mutual aid and oppose imperialism and their own public enemies so that the People's Republic of China will become a big family of fraternity and co-operation, composed of all its nationalities. Within the big family of all nationalities of the People's

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Republic of China national regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated, and all national minorities shall have freedom to develop their spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their customs, habits and religious beliefs, and the Central People's Government shall assist all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work. Since then, all nationalities within the country, with the exception of those in the areas of Tibet and Taiwan [Formosa], have gained liberation. Under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government and the direct leadership of higher levels of People's Governments, all national minorities have fully enjoyed the right of national equality and have exercised, or are exercising, national regional autonomy. In order that the influences of aggressive imperialist forces in Tibet might be successfully eliminated, the unification of the territory and sovereignty of the People's Republic of China accomplished, and national defence safeguarded; in order that the Tibetan nationality and people might be freed and return to the big family of the People's Republic of China to enjoy the same rights of national equality as all the other nationalities in the country and develop their political, economic, cultural and educational work; the Central People's Government, when it ordered the People's Liberation Army to march into Tibet, notified the Local Government of Tibet to send delegates to the central authorities to conduct talks for the conclusion of an agreement on measures for the peaceful liberation of Tibet. At the latter part of April 1951, the delegates with full powers of the Local Government of Tibet arrived in Peking. The Central People's Government appointed representatives with full powers to conduct talks on a friendly basis with the delegates with full powers of the Local Government of Tibet. As a result of the talks, both parties agreed to establish this agreement and ensure that it be carried into effect.

1. The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet; the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the motherland—the People's Republic of China.

2. The Local Government of Tibet shall actively assist the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defences.

3. In accordance with the policy towards nationalities laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Tibetan people have the right of exercising

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national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government.

4. The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual.

5. The established status, functions and powers of the Panchen Ngoerhtehni shall be maintained.

6. By the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and of the Panchen Ngoerhtehni are meant the status, functions and powers of the 13th Dalai Lama and of the 9th Panchen Ngoerhtehni when they were in friendly and amicable relations with each other.

7. The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries.

8. Tibetan troops shall be re-organised step by step into the People's Liberation Army, and become a part of the national defence forces of the People's Republic of China.

9. The spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan nationality shall be developed step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.

10. Tibetan agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce shall be developed step by step, and the people's livelihood shall be improved step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.

11. In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The Local Government of Tibet should carry out reforms on its own accord, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet.

12. In so far as former pro-imperialist and pro-Kuomintang officials resolutely sever relations with imperialism and the Kuomintang and do not engage in sabotage or resistance, they may continue to hold office irrespective of their past.

13. The People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall abide by all the above-mentioned policies and shall also be fair in all buying and selling and shall not arbitrarily take a needle or thread from the people.

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14. The Central People's Government shall have centralised handling of all external affairs of the area of Tibet; and there will be peaceful co-existence with neighbouring countries and establishment and development of fair commercial and trading relations with them on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for territory and sovereignty.

15. In order to ensure the implementation of this agreement, the Central People's Government shall set up a military and administrative committee and a military area headquarters in Tibet, and apart from the personnel sent there by the Central People's Government shall absorb as many local Tibetan personnel as possible to take part in the work.

Local Tibetan personnel taking part in the military and administrative committee may include patriotic elements from the Local Government of Tibet, various districts and various principal monasteries; the name-list shall be set forth after consultation between the representatives designated by the Central People's Government and various quarters concerned, and shall be submitted to the Central People's Government for appointment.

16. Funds needed by the military and administrative committee, the military area headquarters and the People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall be provided by the Central People's Government. The Local Government of Tibet should assist the People's Liberation Army in the purchase and transport of food, fodder and other daily necessities.

17. This agreement shall come into force immediately after signatures and seals are affixed to it.

Signed and sealed by:

Delegates of the Central People's Government with full powers:

Chief Delegate:
LI WEI-HAN

Delegates:
CHANG CHING-WU
CHANG KUO-HUA
SUN CHIH-YUAN

Delegates with full powers of the Local Government of Tibet:

Chief Delegate:
KALOON NGABOU NGAWANG JIGME

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Delegates:

DZASAK KHEMEY SONAM WANGDI
KHENTRUNG THUPTEN TENTHAR
KHENCHUNG THUPTEN LEKMUUN
RIMSHI SAMPOSEY TENZIN THUNDUP

Peking, May 23, 1951.

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APPENDIX II

THE BRITISH-TIBETAN TREATY OF SEPTEMBER 1, 1904

Text of the Younghusband Treaty as published by Waddell in *Lhasa and Its Mysteries.*

PREAMBLE

THE Tibetans having paid no heed to China's counsels, and having failed to conform to the conditions of the treaty signed at Calcutta between China and Great Britain in the sixteenth year of Kuang-hsu (1890) and the treaty of the nineteenth year (1893), owing to their containing terms of ambiguous and objectionable character, Great Britain, finding it necessary to take action on her own account, appointed Colonel Younghusband, a high Boundary official, as plenipotentiary to arrange a satisfactory basis with the Imperial Resident Yu for all matters that required settlement. Great Britain and the Tibetans having now agreed upon ten clauses in connection with the objectionable and doubtful points of the treaty of the sixteenth year, and the Chinese Imperial Resident Yu having duly examined the same treaty, it may accordingly be signed and sealed. After the conclusion of the treaty between China and Great Britain the inhabitants of Tibet shall not violate the terms. This is because the Tibetans failed entirely to conform to the terms of the treaties made in the sixteenth and nineteenth years between China and Great Britain owing to their containing much that was unsatisfactory and objectionable, so that Great Britain specially appointed Colonel Younghusband as plenipotentiary in frontier affairs to proceed to the frontier and negotiate. Unexpectedly hostilities were again committed, thus causing a rupture of amicable relations, but negotiations have now been opened and ten clauses definitely agreed upon, in order that upon completion of the treaty and the sealing of the same by the Dalai Lama, as head of the Yellow Priesthood, and Colonel Younghusband, the Boundary Commissioner, peace may hereafter be secured.

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ARTICLE I

The Tibetans hereby agree, in accordance with the first clause of the treaty of the sixteenth year, to re-erect boundary stones at the Sikhim frontier.

ARTICLE II

The Tibetans hereby agree to establish marts at Gyantse and Kotako (Gartok) in addition to Yatung, for the purpose of mutual trading between the British and Tibetan merchants at their free convenience. Great Britain will arrange with Tibet for the alteration of all objectionable features in the treaty of the nineteenth year of Kuang-hsu, and as soon as this agreement shall have been completed, arrangements shall be made at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok accordingly. The Tibetans having agreed to establish markets at Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, merchandise purchased by Tibetans from India may be transported along existing routes, and arrangements may be made for opening marts in future at other prosperous commercial places.

ARTICLE III

With regard to any objectionable features of the treaty of the nineteenth year requiring alteration separate arrangement may be made, and Tibet will appoint a Tibetan official having plenipotentiary authority to confer with the British officials for their alteration.

ARTICLE IV

No further Customs duties may be levied upon merchandise after the tariff shall have been agreed upon by Great Britain and the Tibetans.

ARTICLE V

On the route between the Indian frontier and Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok no Customs stations may be established. Tibet shall repair any dangerous passes on the road in order to facilitate merchants travelling thereon and the prevention of difficulties. Tibet shall appoint native officials at these three places, and the officials appointed by Great Britain at these places shall have their correspondence with the Imperial Resident and other Chinese officials forwarded through the above-mentioned native officials. Similar officials shall be appointed at other flourishing places which may be opened to trade and the same course adopted.

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ARTICLE VI

Tibet having disobeyed the treaties and insulted the Commissioner by the wrongful commission of hostile acts, shall pay Great Britain an indemnity of 5,000,000 dollars equivalent to Rs. 7,500,000 (£500,000),[1] payable in three yearly instalments; the first payment to be on 1st January 1906. When the time arrives Great Britain will first notify the Tibetans as to the place at which payment shall be made, or whether receipt may be taken thereof at the Tibetan temple at Darjeeling.

ARTICLE VII

For performance of the conditions comprised in Articles II, III, and IV for opening trading stations, and in the sixth clause relative to the indemnity as security for the punctual discharge of its obligations on the part of Tibet, British troops will continue to occupy the Chumbi Valley for three years, until the trading places are satisfactorily established and the indemnity liquidated in full. In the event of the indemnity's not being paid, England will continue in occupation of Chumbi.

ARTICLE VIII

All forts between the Indian frontier and Gyantse on routes traversed by merchants from the interior of Tibet shall be demolished.

ARTICLE IX

Without the consent of Great Britain no Tibetan territory shall be sold, leased, or mortgaged to any foreign Power whatsoever; no foreign Power whatsoever shall be permitted to concern itself with the administration of the Government of Tibet or any other affairs therewith connected; no foreign Power shall be permitted to send either official or non-official persons to Tibet, no matter in what pursuit they may be engaged, to assist in the conduct of Tibetan affairs; no foreign Power shall be permitted to construct roads or railways or erect telegraphs or open mines anywhere in Tibet. In the event of Great Britain's consenting to another Power constructing roads or railways, opening mines, or creating telegraphs, Great Britain will make a full examination on her own account for carrying out the arrangements proposed. No real property or land containing minerals or precious

[1] This amount was afterwards reduced by the Home Government to one-third.

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metals in Tibet shall be mortgaged, exchanged, leased, or sold to any foreign Power.

ARTICLE X

The Boundary Commissioner Jung and the Dalai Lama will sign and seal this treaty on the 22nd day of the 7th moon of the Tibetan calendar, being the 1st day of September 1904 of the English calendar. Of the two versions, English and Tibetan, the English text shall be regarded as authoritative.

(A Peking telegram of April 14, 1905, says: "It is understood that, as the result of the recent negotiations between Great Britain and China, the terms of the Tibet Convention have been slightly modified. The establishment of trade marts in Tibet is left for arrangement at a later date. The British Government agrees not to demand Customs dues on Tibetan goods entering India until all details have been completed. Whereas the original Convention provided that no Tibetan revenues should be pledged or assigned to any foreign Power, the Customs receipts of Tibet are now specifically mentioned in this connection, as well as the revenues generally. In other respects the terms of the Convention remain as already officially published.")

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